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DECEMBER, 1913

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The SMART SET

WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT
EDITOR

NOV 19 1913



GOOD STRONG STUFF!

BY

James Huneker
Will Lexington Comfort
W. L. George
Richard Le Gallienne
H. de Vere Stacpoole
Ludwig Lewisohn
Barry Benefield
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Vol. XLI

DECEMBER, 1913

No. 4

THE SMART SET

WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT, Editor

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$3.00

SINGLE COPIES 25 CENTS

Entered at New York Post Office as second class mail matter

Issued monthly by John Adams Thayer Corporation

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452 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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25 cents a number
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443 Fourth Ave., New York
Condé Nast - - - Publisher

4 dollars a year
Twenty-four numbers

Vol. XLI.

DECEMBER, 1913

No. 4

THE SMART SET

The Magazine For Minds That Are Not Primitive

PIPPA

By E. H. de Vere Stacpoole

IT was springtime, and the road to Sasso was perfumed with violets.

In those days, Bordighera was a fortified town, and Sasso, a few miles further to the northeast, a stronghold, the fear of Barbary coast pirates still alive in the land, and the road traveled chiefly by men in armor, mule trains and mendicant friars. Just where the road turns into the valley that leads to the hill that leads to the valley of Sasso, looking back, you could see, with one sweep of the eye, a hundred miles of coastline; you can see it still. Bay, broken and blue, beyond the ruins of La Turbie above the white city of Monaco, beyond Villefranche and the headland hiding Nice, beyond the Gulf Juan and the headland of Antibes, it still leads the gaze to the far-off Estereles.

A mule train had just passed along the road, and the sound of the bells had scarcely died out when, tramping along in the dust and the sun, came two figures, the figure of a monk and the figure of a young man, walking side by side, evidently fellow travelers. The monk was a huge creature, desolate and gaunt and skeleton-like with years of fighting against Satan; one of the tremendous figures which the Church let loose against the devil when the devil wore colored hose and carried a guitar and a dagger, a rose in one hand and a poison ring on the other.

The name of the monk was Borromeo, and he was tramping from Avignon to Rome on some business of the Church.

The young man tramping beside him was good-looking, plump, not more than eighteen or so, an artist by profession, carrying his painting traps on his back. His name was Gaspard, a native of Grasse, a church decorator and saint painter.

Since they had joined company at Grasse some days ago the monk had been in his proper element. Gaspard, young, innocent and full of original sin, was just the person for Borromeo; every turn of the road on the journey from Grasse had given the grim one the text for a lecture or the story of some impossible saint. So that Gaspard, dusty, nerve-fretted and sick of the devil, would long ago have parted company with his companion but for the fact that Borromeo was not the man to be parted easily from. That grim figure was the center of a tremendous force. The face and the figure and the voice repelled you, but the force held you in its grip. Borromeo was, in fact, deadly in earnest in everything he said and did; so absolutely single-hearted and unconscious of self that, had he burnt you as a heretic, you could not have felt the least malice toward him, if you were a man of any intelligence. On the contrary, you would

have known that what he was doing was being done for the best, and ten to one, would have believed it, too.

It was this earnestness that held Gaspard from open mutiny, and might have held him to the end of the journey but for a sore heel that had been troubling him since morning. A cross-grained companion and a sore heel are a bad combination to resist, and it was just on entering the happy valley leading to Sasso that the explosion took place.

"You say the devil is everywhere," broke out Gaspard, relative to some remark of his companion. "I don't believe it. He is not amongst the flowers, and he is not where happiness is, but I verily believe he is on this dusty road."

Dead silence on the part of the monk.

"Look at those green rushes by the little river that please the eye so and make the heart feel glad; would you tell me the devil is there?"

No reply.

"And the birds? When they sing do they sing to the devil? They are happy because they love one another. Yet everything joyous and pretty and pleasing seems, from what you say, to come from the devil. Well, if that is so, the devil seems to me to do more good than—"

Two flaming eyes suddenly shone on him and dried up his eloquence.

"The devil is indeed on this road, and, methinks I have been walking with him; go your way, for to speak to one like you is like casting water upon stones."

Borromeo crossed himself, wheeled and was off.

"The devil go with you!" cried Gaspard. It was really his sore heel that was speaking, but the monk could not tell that. He turned with a shudder that made him look like a flame in the wind, crossed himself again and was off, walking five miles an hour, and looking as if he meant to keep it up to Rome.

Gaspard sat down on an old broken wall. He could have bitten his tongue off for saying those last words, yet pride and his still smouldering fretfulness kept him from running after the other and apologizing; and in a moment, taking a bend of the road, the other was gone.

"Now, surely, he was right," said Gaspard to himself, after a few minutes' rest had restored his temper and cleared his mind. "The devil is ever present to us and hides even in the fairest things, seeing that, in my defense of them, he has led me to use such words to that holy man. Flowers, blue sky, songs of birds and ye green-growing rushes, how have you betrayed me—unless it be, as he said, that you are all but patterns on the cloak of the devil!"

Scarcely had the words left his lips before the rushes shook, a hand divided them, and the prettiest girl in the world disclosed herself to his view.

II

SHE had been cutting osiers. Her left arm clasped a great bundle of them; her face was still flushed with stooping at her work; and her legs, bare and brown and perfectly formed, were wet with the river water.

He saw all this in one flash of sunlight, and then, half blinded by the black flame of her eyes, he heard her voice giving him good day, country fashion, and his own voice replying.

Now one of the chief weapons in the devil's armory is forgetfulness. So it came about that Gaspard, after the first flush of surprise, forgot the devil completely and saw only the girl.

She had placed the bundle of osiers on the ground, and was tying them together that she might carry them more easily. Then she rose to her feet, straightened her back, brushed back the black hair from her eyes and laughed, as though to say: "There! I've cut my osiers and bound them together; my task is done, and I'm off."

Anything more cordial and friendly and gay and full of youth than that laugh it would be impossible to find in this weary world, and she was just on the point of stooping to pick up her osiers when Gaspard cried: "Stop!"

He had taken his bundle from the wall where he had placed it, and his painting traps from the bundle; the

artist had sprung alive in him. Thrilled to the soul by the picture before him, he pinned a parchment to his easel board, measuring her the while with his eye.

"Nay, do not move, not even a finger, that I may catch you just as you are. Then I will have caught Spring herself in your laughter. Laugh! Laugh! And may the saints give me skill to catch that laughter so that men may love you who have never seen you."

He was working feverishly, and she was laughing at him as she posed, without altering in the least the pose he longed to catch, for she was as great an artist as he, and knew exactly what he wanted, albeit that her art was of a passive nature; that is to say, the art of a woman.

Now, it is well known that laughter, no less than human beauty, is one of the chief of the traps and works of the devil. If you doubt me, walk through the league-long galleries of the Continent. If in all those miles of Marys and martyrs, painted by men who knew what they were about, you find any trace of human joy or laughter more than once in ten furlongs, I will take back all I have said. But Gaspard was beyond any consideration of this kind, till, the sketch finished, he held it out at arms' length for criticism, and she drew beside him to admire.

It was masterly, yet he was not satisfied. They began to dispute about it, she upholding it, he condemning it; and then, quite unconsciously, they began to drift toward other matters, and he found himself sitting on the broken wall, the sketch on his knee, she beside him, and he telling of himself and his journey to Rome.

In ten minutes or so they seemed to have known each other a lifetime; he showed her his sore heel, told her the story of the monk Borromeo and laughed with her over it. They grew more confidential one to the other, and drew a bit closer. They then were silent for a moment, and she sighed for no apparent reason. Then they were silent for a little longer, and she sighed again.

This surprised him, and he turned his

face toward her. At the same moment she turned her face toward him, and their eyes met. She was not laughing now. Serious and far-searching, as though fascinated by some infinitely distant star, her gaze sank deep, deep into the remoteness of his being, stirring to life and joy and sorrow something that had never lived before.

Then, in the most natural way in the world, and just as though it had found its proper resting place, he felt her warm body in his arms, and their lips were clinging together in a kiss frantic and passionate, the kiss of two beings mad for each other with the madness of desire and youth.

At that moment the monk Borromeo was plodding along a mile beyond Sasso in the burning sun, grim and unrelenting; his only comfort the remembrance of Gaspard's sore heel and the thoughts of the trouble it must be giving him.

III

"LISTEN to me," said Pippa. "There is an old disused granary near our house; there you can hide while you make that other picture of me—clasp me tight. Oh, smother me with your lips, that I may die loving you and in your arms."

They were in the olive grove adjoining the farm where she lived; the place was sweet with violets—the violets always grow sweetest in the olive groves—and when he released her she led him toward the granary, leaving him at the blank wall of it while she ran round to reconnoitre.

She returned in a moment:

"There is nobody about; come quick, and pray to the saints we are not seen."

A minute later they were in the yard, she climbing the ladder to the loft, he following and kissing her bare ankles.

When they were safe in the loft, and unseen, they embraced. The sound of wood pigeons murmuring and making love on the roof came to them, and the drone of bees. The loft was a bare

place, containing nothing but a few trusses of straw, yet they would not have exchanged it for the most sumptuous heaven and the company of angels.

Half an hour passed, an hour; and then Pippa started.

A bald-headed old man, short, brutal and obese, had entered the yard with a bundle of rushes on his shoulder.

They were Pippa's rushes, which she had dropped in the orchard, and he was shouting for Pippa and cursing her at the same time.

She rose, with her finger to her lip, went to the opening against which was propped the ladder, and looked down, while Gaspard peeped.

"Here am I."

The bald-headed one looked up.

"Ah, there you are! And what are you doing idling in the loft, you slut? The saints defend me, but you have been half the day gone for these rushes, and the goats not milked. Hey! What have you been doing? Hey!"

"I came up here to look for a dove I had lost. I saw it fly in here, but it must have flown out through the hole in the roof."

"Well, down with you and milk the goats."

"I come."

She turned and glanced at Gaspard with a little grimace, smiled and vanished down the ladder.

"What a father to have!" thought he.

Then he lay on the straw, gazing at the bit of blue sky visible through the opening, and lost in the dream of Pippa.

The remembrance of her clung to him with arms almost as warm as the real arms of Pippa. This lovely bit of fortune had made him richer than all the wealth and all the success in the world could have made him. Love at first sight, full-blown, and plucked almost when seen, fragrant, living and dew-spangled, is a flower that comes into the possession of not one in ten million men. He lay contemplating it, and watching the square of blue sky, against which now and then the white pigeons circled. So engrossed, he fell asleep.

IV

HE awoke toward sunset, and found beside him a pitcher of milk, some rye bread and a piece of cheese. She had evidently visited him in his sleep, and, without awakening him, had left the food by his side. He sat up and ate the bread and cheese and drank the milk. Then he went to the opening and peeped cautiously.

It was now just that moment after sunset, the very birth of dusk, when all things are still clearly seen, but vaguely as though viewed through a magic veil. The pigeons were saying good night to one another, and the first dance of the fireflies was about to begin. Faint sounds came from the farmyard, the clacking of hens, the bleat of a goat, and, over all, the sound of the evening breeze, bearing with it the freshness of night and all the perfumes of a hundred leagues of spring.

When would she return? At moments he could scarcely believe that all he had experienced was real; then, again, the recollection of her became so vividly alive that he could feel her breathing at his elbow.

Now the stars were thrilling out, and soon the moonlight would be abroad on the country, making fairyland in the olive groves, where the nightingales were already calling, chanting, waking echoes and replies from the valley of Dolce Acola to the valley of Sasso.

Gaspard turned from the opening, and lay down again on the straw. It seemed to him that he could listen better so. For a while there was nothing to hear, but just as the first beam of moonlight came, like a searching finger upon the floor of the loft, a sound from outside made him sit up.

The ladder was shaking, a dark form broke the moonlight at the entrance, and the next moment she was beside him, laughing, panting, as though she had been running, clasping him to her and kissing him at the same time.

"He has beaten me and turned me out," she whispered. "It is the second time he has done it, and all because I burnt the milk for his supper—on

purpose. 'Go, sleep in the loft,' said he; 'herd with the animals,' and he an animal himself worse than the pigs in the sty. Nay, I am not crying; I am laughing—laughing to think of his face if he knew."

"Listen to me," whispered Gaspard. "You are unhappy here. How can I ever go and leave you? Come with me, my loved one, and we will go through the world together, even to Rome. I have money enough for us both, and my brush will bring me more. You are my soul; you bring me dreams, and with you I will accomplish that which I could never accomplish alone."

"Without you I would die," said she.

"Then you will come?"

"I will come."

"Now?"

"In an hour, when the moon is higher in the sky. We have the whole night before us to walk through, and before dawn he starts on some business to Dolce Acola. He will not return till tomorrow evening, and then when he finds out that I am gone it will be too late to pursue me."

Now if Gaspard had thought the matter over he would have seen how wrong it was to take a girl from her father without his consent, and, not being ill off in the matter of worldly goods, he might have delayed matters, gone to the bald-headed one and laid a proposal of marriage in due form, with a result which you will appreciate when you have finished the story. Being hot-headed and young, and eaten up with love, he gave no thought to anything but the immediate satisfaction of his desires, and when the hour, which seemed a minute, had expired, he found himself in the yard at the foot of the ladder hand in hand with Pippa in the full moonlight. They stole from the yard to the road, but they had reckoned without the yard dog, which, scenting treason to its master, set up such a barking and chain rattling that, half paralyzed with fright, they hid themselves in the shadow that the yard wall cast on the road, not daring to show themselves in the broad moonlight.

They heard the bald-headed man

shouting from the house doorway at the dog, and the dog barking at him in reply; they heard him searching about for robbers and then beating the animal for giving a false alarm. Then the house door closed, and silence took the place.

"Come," said Pippa.

You can still see the road they took; it breaks off suddenly at a farm and turns into a mule track which leads up the hill to Sasso, amidst olive groves and vineyards, growing today just as they grew then.

They skirted the little fortified town, passed down the valley and up the next hill, and by dawn they were far away, twenty miles at least from the farm and the bald-headed man and the dog, and twenty thousand leagues away from the life they had lived till yesterday.

The road here was still little more than a mule track; it led between great forests of pine, fragrant and green and shivering to the early morning breeze.

They sat down to rest on a mossy tussock by the way, their arms round one another, and the whole wild world of spring greeting them with perfume and the sounds of birds and wind-rocked trees. The sunlight came down the track toward them, kissing their feet, and the squirrels in the branches above peeped at them.

"Are you tired?"

Pippa laughed. "With you? It seems to me I have not walked, but that all night long the trees have passed me as in a dream."

"As for me," said Gaspard, "I have known happiness before, but only as a name. They call you Pippa, but that is not your name; your name is Happiness."

"And yours!"

Then they talked of their journey, and how they would find some farmhouse and get food, and sleep in the forest by day and journey by night, for the moon being not yet full, they had long nights of moonlight before them.

"There is only one thing I regret," said Gaspard, "and that is your father and the way we parted with him. It

is not good to leave one's father in anger."

"My father? But I have no father," said Pippa; "he died when I was yet a little child."

"Died! Who was he then, that man?"

"What man?"

"The bald-headed man who beat you?"

"My husband!"

Gaspard caught back his breath, but what he was about to say was stricken from his lips by the sight of a figure far away along the track and coming toward them.

It was Borromeo. The anger of the monk had carried him many leagues, till the justice of the man arraigned the monk and found him at fault. He was returning now to pick up the lost sheep.



DANCE OF THE SUNBEAMS

By Bliss Carman

WHEN morning is high o'er the hilltops,
On river and stream and lake,
Wherever a young breeze whispers,
The sun-clad dancers wake.

One after one upspringing,
They flash from their dim retreat;
Merry as running laughter
Is the news of their twinkling feet.

Over the floors of azure
Wherever the wind flaws run,
Sparkling, leaping and racing,
Their antics scatter the sun.

As long as water ripples
And weather is clear and glad,
Day after day they are dancing,
Never a moment sad.

But when through the field of heaven
The wings of storm take flight,
At a touch of the flying shadows
They falter and slip from sight.

Until, at the gray day's ending.
As the squadrons of cloud retire,
They pass in the triumph of sunset
With banners of crimson fire.

THE PAINTED WILDERNESS

By Will Levington Comfort

THIS is not a pastoral, but a story of the Mammon Canyon men, irascible from gold tension, not to mention heat, rock dust and whiskey. Farther up, the Mammon is crossed by cattle fords and mutton trails and railroads, but all that sort of thing is put away as it nears the bordering Cabezo, sinks into a gorge and shows enough *yellow* to hold the settlement and keep it miserable.

You'd hardly know it was Arizona. A smart placer outfit can easily forget its country. There is something bland and abandoned, too, in being so close to Mexico. A tall man for half the year could ford the Cabezo, which does not exactly form the border line but for a little way is denoted as such by the community.

The claims were scattered along the Mammon gorge for a mile or more, as the Canyon stream turns a last time in its sleep before winning its nameless Nirvana in the Cabezo. The settlement is on the east bluff of the low canyon, and accentuates the emptiness of the long southern slope of the mesquite mesa—a desolate grade from the Sierra Diablo peaks to the main river.

Bleak Totten's claim was one of the first staked. It was supposed to be the heart of eldorado, before the settlement lost its dreams and became a commonplace *eke*. Bleak had given it a good trial—for him. It hadn't paid. Fortitude Lerch was doing well on the South, but he drank river water and gambled not—in short, was a regular "*eke*" man. Fortitude could make a paying truck garden in a gravel pit, and went about the gold wash as coldly as if he were looking for scattered vegetable seeds.

Bertie Cotton was doing well on the North, but he had really hit it off. He had drawn the claim that Bleak should have taken, it was said; for Bleak was in at the first ascent. Cotton was a little man with a violent disposition.

Bleak was soft-handed; a natural gambler but not a winning one. His present business was man hunting. Having been deputy to Fred Husted, sheriff of the river country, who had died of ptomaine poisoning, he now took title and dignity. Bleak wouldn't steal; also he wouldn't work regularly, so (exclusive of the former sheriff, from whom there is no report) it fell out happily. Headquarters of the sheriff was in Nig Fantod's bar and layout. The angry scratches on the back of Bleak's claim, made in his fresh frenzy for riches, were fast effacing scars.

Totten had a decent human heart, but it leaked. Giving was an emotion to him. He couldn't keep a hair shirt. As a giver he was dissipated, indiscriminate. . . . A bulky person. . . . How excited and grieved he would have been to learn from some world-weathered outsider that he was a mammoth in innocence! It was true. The world had not bit into him. He was so strong that nothing in the day's routine trained him; and of his large brain surfaces only a small central plat was under cultivation. Even whiskey was a matter of the custom of men. He felt better without it. This worried and dismayed Bleak. Three or four jolts—just enough to make most men happy tenants in the flesh, carried him to the austere borderlands of illness, where one more would have betrayed him entirely—not in excitation and wayward conduct, but

in physical revolt. You could not have made Bleak happy by saying that he was too healthy, too natural, to endure this villainous prodding. He was vitally ashamed of his weak stewardship of the stuff that men lived and died for in the Canyon.

Moreover, he was too normal to get on with any of the women of the settlement. He would no more have confessed his ghastly panic alone with one of these women than his incapacity for more than a touch or two of the ordained stimulant. Bleak was far from splendid in his own eyes.

The dead sheriff had named the placer Sodom. Disdaining the obvious, the settlement planted a few weeks afterward, fourteen miles up the river, was not Gomorrah, but Nineveh. The two towns affiliated. It was a keen sportive and competitive brotherhood. So far as Mammon County was concerned, there were none besides. The late sheriff had divided his time impartially between the two towns, but the heart of Bleak throbbed for Sodom. He did his best not to let this appear—but his face and life were clear as the Devil Mountains against the sunrise. Sodom used Bleak as a source of humor; and had been unable to go too far.

In a community strange to delicacy, an unrestricted presumption is slow to halt, but Bleak loved it all. To be fellow-in-good-standing in Sodom was all he asked of power. Nineveh, on the contrary, was ready enough to respect the new sheriff. He had size and silence. As for the rest, there had been no showdown.

Bleak happened to be in Nineveh when a certain small stranger rode in on a buckskin saddle pony, leading a young and pretty brown mare, addressed as Miss Mincing. He put her away with quiet care in the breezy shed back of the blacksmith shop, and lariated the sorry veteran outside. Looking a last time, to be sure that all was snug with the led horse, the young man repaired to the bar for refreshment.

There was a bit of Spanish or Mexican in the lad, but he had evidently spent years on this side of the border. His

self-contentment now began to disturb Nineveh. He seemed to find himself capacious and sufficient. For an hour he played solitaire with his own deck, taking jolts at the bar from time to time. It was this last—the resignation with which he catered to a thirst out of all proportion to his size, and utterly disordering when one glanced at the brown boyish face—that especially aroused the village. He was certainly long on “red likker” for a child, Nineveh was forced to grant. It was Peters the bartender who spoke first:

“Goin’ to stop here?”

“No.”

“An’ what might your name be?”

“Larry.”

“Goin’ fur?”

Unlike many who are self-contained, the stranger proved amiable.

“They call it Sodom—where I go.”

“An’ what might be callin’ you to Sodom, as if sent fur?” Peters asked, relieved. There had been some tension about breaking the ice. Since the stranger replied with courtesy, Peters felt he might go on with his work, contemptuously familiar.

“A running horse there—I’ve heard spoke of—”

Peters snorted. The stranger wasn’t even solid on his facts. He didn’t hasten to divulge.

“You speak?” Larry asked politely.

“I didn’t say nothin’. Thar ain’t nothin’ to say about that Sodom hoss—” Peters helped himself to a drink, regarding his own image in the small over-worked mirror, as he lifted his uncashed portion with a flourish.

Larry regarded him studiously, then dealt himself out a fresh hand.

Two citizens of Nineveh entered and were regaled with the incident of the “Sodom hoss,” Peters concluding his narrative with: “An’ I told him there wa’n’t nothin’ to say about that Sodom hoss—”

One of the listeners now approached the stranger, informing him with:

“Not wishin’ to keep you in no suspense, might I inquire what hoss you has in mind?”

“Lazaroos—Lazarine—” Larry re-

peated the syllables carefully, as if foreign to his consciousness.

"U-mm. And findin' said Lazarus—might I inquire your intentions toward same?"

Larry put down his hand, and smiled boyishly, as if condoning a weakness of his own.

"You see, sir," he said, "I have money. In the North they say—such a good horse live in Sodom. I come to see if he is better horse than my small mare."

"Which, I take it, is square and neatly put," replied the other. "You're just wide on one thing, young feller—an' that is about Lazarus residin' in Sodom. Nothin' down than resemblin' a runnin' hoss much more than a tea kettle. The hoss you want is right here in Ninevah—an' what's more, I'm Bill Champian what holds the deed thereof an' good will an' the makin' of matches—"

Larry rose. It seemed for a moment that he was about to clap his hands with delight, but at the last instant he preserved his front. Such conduct would have ruined it utterly. Bleak sunk into deep interest. The black-eyed boy was gentle and low-voiced as a woman. Whiskey was milk to him; and there had been a play of hands over the cards, that made Bleak think of trick squirrels in the matter of speed and mastery of small movements. They were very small and frail brown hands, except for the ends of the fingers, which were knobbed, cushioned and almost nailless.

The race was arranged in two minutes, but negotiations were beaten thin over the rest of the afternoon. Bleak was absorbed in the extreme delicacy of these. The general atmosphere of Nineveh was that of something to live for. Repairing to the shed, behind the blacksmith shop, Bleak heard the following as Larry led out the brown filly:

"You see, sir, not much running horse where I live."

"Some promisin' debutante—that," said Champian, eying the brown mare, and coming closer.

"She very gentle—except don't touch near stifle joint," Larry said, with a touch of haste.

"Right you are," acknowledged Cham-

pian. "Some o' them real good young mares are partic'lar."

The boy hastened to add: "I just want to know—if she really run—"

"I reckon you've come to the right place."

Larry regarded him gratefully, and turned again to the Mincing maiden. "She hardly finished to grow," he said, with a touch of emotion. "See, her head—a baby head!"

Bleak was sorry for the boyish chap, whose love was affecting, but misguided to the extent of wasting his savings. Bill Champian dropped a brown paw across Larry's shoulder. "We don't lock nobody up in this village," he said, "for lettin' fly affections on a good hoss. . . . I 'member when I had my first runnin' hoss. That filly o' yours'll make a good mare. She's a purty little piece."

The race was arranged for noon of the day after tomorrow.

"Sodom'll want to get a few dollars up here," Bleak observed. "I'll take the stage back tonight an' report."

II

So Bleak carried back the word that old Lazarus, a roan pony distinguished in years but rejuvenated in matter of record, was to defend the Canyon county against the modest intrusion of a little brown filly named Miss Mincing, from the indefinite North, and under the immediate management of a young stranger named Larry.

Raw gold was not recognized tender along the Canyon. The eke was assembled and cashed during the first week of each month. Commercial arrangements were conducted in the intervals largely on credit. The placer settlement found that by keeping the gold out of circulation it was in a way defended from its own lawless incentives to drink and gamble. All this to explain that the fourteenth of the month was not a good gambling day for Sodom, and that the money Bleak collected to take back to Nineveh for the horse race, while considerable, meant pain and sacrifice and growling.

Bleak had none of his own, and since he did not work his claim, had none coming. The regular workers could borrow at a vicious percentage from the thrifty Fortitude Lerch—but Bleak had no such collateral as a monthly moiety, and his wage as sheriff was distant and already sorely embarrassed.

There was a general credit at Nig's bar from month to month, but the faro layout was a neglected side issue of the same institution except during the four or five days after each payday. Nig resented the horse race. His booze book was already deeply laid with credit and advances; dust was deep on the layout; while here and now his natural prey was straining distractedly and in divers directions to raise money for the plundering outdoor sport up in Nineveh.

There was one bright ray over all. Lazarus was unbeatable. Bleak melted in pity for the boyish Larry. Such a fine frank lad, with such an unmistakable love for animals. It seemed an uncouth thing to go out after his property. Bleak, however, didn't hear any sentiments of this sort expressed around Sodom, and he had long since lost faith in his own convictions.

Pray permit one momentary confidence. From a child, Bleak had lost station—and the comfortable awe of others—by making explanations of his ideas and feelings. Year after year he grew upon memories of the soft places of past conversations. Here and there he had warmed to this and that individual—and warming, he had spoken. Under stars and in back room bars, he had given forth himself. It had come back to him hot and galvanic with scorn. Upon his confidences invariably a butt was established. Such was the young life of the sheriff whose present law was: "When in doubt, say 'Yes' or 'No.'"

Such, gentlemen, was the serpent wisdom of Bleak Totten, but Sodom had him on the old basis.

Against the wish to strip the boy, Larry, present needs and the innate love of the gambler rose high and authoritative in the breast of Bleak. Somebody would take Larry's money—why not a piece of it? Consummate psy-

chology is required to bring the Totten faculties to light. . . . Bleak sold a six-shooter. He tried for the manieth time to sell his claim, and failed. He mortgaged the slight and remote balance of his next draw from the county. Since he was to carry the Sodom money to the paddock at Nineveh, a mentionable percentage was coming to him in the essential event of winning. Moreover, there were a few left, soft enough to add to their personal loans. Altogether, he had a personal stake that kept him apart from the pikers.

Sodom was too poor to lose a day and a half, so Bleak went alone. He took with him every separate and aggregate dollar that could be tortured from the community.

There was but a rudiment of an escarpment in the Mammon river bed at Nineveh. Hard grit along the bank, the distance being about six furlongs, formed the speedway.

Larry pointed to an upright engine, close to the track, a little better than halfway to the stretch, and inquired kindly as to its nature. Miss Mincing had been led over the course, and was now ready for the start at the edge of the settlement.

Bill Champian, swift to reply, spoke casually:

"That h'istin' gear? Well, young feller, when we started this placer outfit, thar were some designs on makin' her a strictly modern enterprise. Ol' Mammon herself is to blame. That's as fur as we arrived in machinery—"

"But the steam is up—"

"Sure—she's a gravel h'ist—"

"It is close to the track."

"It would be easier a whole lot—to move the track, young feller."

Larry glanced at Miss Mincing. She was watching it now from afar. A sweet thing she was, subdued shine of brown on her coat, head and ears up, and breathing just so you could hear.

Larry still regarded it doubtfully.

Bleak's heart smote him. That hoisting gear was the only devil Lazarus knew. The old roan sweated in his stall a half-mile away when the whistle

blew. Headed that way, Lazarus became a runaway, with the one idea of getting it behind him. He wouldn't leave the track—but his effort became supernatural as he neared, passed and felt the sheeted fiend at his loins. This was indispensable property of the Lazarus greatness in his declining years. There couldn't have been a race without it. This was the devil that rode Lazarus to victory.

Now it proved that Larry had more money with him than his modest words conveyed. What Nineveh cared to gamble and what Bleak brought from Sodom—was matched dollar for dollar. Bleak, as sheriff and non-resident of the racing town, was stakeholder.

"Larry," he said hoarsely at the last moment, "if you lose, and need a bit of change to get on your way—just ask for Bleak Totten, won't you?"

"Thank you, Mister Sheriff," said the boy. "We try not make Nineveh ashamed for us."

Bleak's inclination as delegate from Sodom was to tender the affectionate regard of the entire county, but his old fear of words recalled the utterance from mid-stream. Halfway through the first sentence he gripped Larry's elbow and murmured that he'd be pleased to buy a drink after the race.

A flying start, perfectly accomplished—Beanie Tuttle sitting Lazarus, Larry riding his own—and the race was on. . . . The narrative has not progressed thus far with any hope of surprising the reader—as Nineveh and Sodom were surprised and pained. Though a sort of climax to the overture, that horse race belongs to the present opus merely as an introduction of theme. . . . Bleak took the favorite Ninevehian position, near the hoisting gear, to watch the race.

The horses were not ten seconds on their way when he realized with a burst of pleasure that Larry didn't need to apologize for Miss Mincing. She settled down to work, her muzzle slightly tilted toward the roan's withers, and held the pace which Lazarus increased in jumps, as a car with the full juice turned on too suddenly. The essence

of the tremendous excitement in the mind of Bleak—a lover of animals—was that slightly tilted muzzle, that modestly inquiring muzzle of the Mincing maiden, like the pleasant attitude of a loved child. There was nothing pert about it—but salient, containing the titanic ease that goes with mastery, and before which kings bow, and clowns.

Bleak's first restlessness arose out of this emotion—out of his delight in the sheer beauty of the filly's performance. No other horse had ever held the pace with Lazarus, now charging his private and perfect dragon. The course was half run before realization penetrated the stress of the moment—that she might hold the pace at the end, with a fraction over at the finish.

The wine of the man's life changed to impotent water. He fought to stand upon his limbs. The horses were upon him, Beanie Tuttle pulling on the left rein with all his might to keep Lazarus, in his suicidal mania, from flattening against the gear. Larry was running low and light, with a loose rein. Miss Mincing might play with her nerves in the try-out, but no man-made machinery could break her concentration when the deep wells of her art were thus gushing in expression.

Lazarus, hideous progeny of nightmare, and at the withers of this roan scourge, the brown filly held her place, as at the beginning—her muzzle tilted slightly, respectfully. She was a thing of pure spirit to Bleak's dazed mind—playfully contending with matter before destroying it. He saw the *end* in her ease, in her sweetness, in the pale ecstasy of Larry.

And now at the instant of their passing, the main artifice of the course was sprung—the sky-rending whistle of the hoisting gear. It jerked Bleak back into his body with a psychic wrench that groggled him like a blow on the chin. The flanks of the runners were lost in dust. . . . They were apart at the finish; the bad angle divulged nothing more.

Bleak was sitting upon the grit. He didn't recall getting there. Somehow he had been dropped at the last. From

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the silence about him, he pieced together his ruin, and his worse than ruin—the horror of facing Sodom. . . . And over this was a sort of idolatry for the brown filly, that enveloped the boy who loved and conquered with her. . . . Larry was riding up. Miss Mincing courtesied to the hoist, danced engagingly and breathed in low excitement.

"We maybe have that drink now, Mister Sheriff," Larry said politely.

Bleak got to his feet. The unaccustomed stiffness of his trousers pockets seemed first to contain a vague deep trouble—some undesignated disaster. The idea of buying a drink narrowed it down to the inevitable revelation. He passed over the stakes, plucking forth with muttered apology—a key, four matches and a cocoa bean.

"Whoa, little kid," Larry said fondly, as he distributed the paper variously about his person. "She miss that engine—next time race."

Afar on the mesa, in a great circle, the central point of which was the hoisting gear, the roan was being led back to paddock.

III

BLEAK alighted from the stage at the outer hoop of Sodom. Had the town been a room full of cornered train robbers, he could, with the eyes of his townsmen upon him, have burst open the door; but to be the first to "give down" the news, wasn't in him. Bleak crept into Nig Fantod's bar an hour after the stage. The layout lay in shroud and shadow. The bar was not only empty but stainless. Here and there, as you might picture a ruined city recently excavated, human figures were hunched in chairs, faces in hands, elbows on knees.

Over this presided the one implacable eye of Nig Fantod—the bar between him and the rest, his sleeves rolled up. The Eye now roved to Bleak, who winced. He wanted to sneak into one of the farthest, most shadowed chairs, and take his head in his hands like the others.

"Here he is with your winnin's, gents—here he comes all heeled to the buff an' pash'nit to purchase—"

There was a halt, and then the scathing irony took another turn:

"If you gold pickers spent your evenin's gamblin' natchurl—'stid o' sportin' round other people's hosses, mebbe you wouldn't get shed o' the town's payroll by the fifteenth of the month—and mebbe you would. . . . Sport o' kings—hey! This panhandle placer gives me the cramps. A guarden is needed here—right acute."

Nobody answered; nobody seemed to listen. Perhaps the monologue had progressed far before Bleak entered. . . . Nig turned slightly, dropped his hands over the shoulder of a black square bottle and twisted the cork. It was like the death squeak of a mouse—the cork tight against the glass. There was a twitch in the shoulders of the men nearest. A head was raised in the far shadows. A single glass was plumped on the bar presently, "with white fire laden," which mortals call Tom gin.

Nig tweaked the cork again—queer nervous jolts shot through the hunched figures, but nobody looked up. Nig now refreshed himself with old Square Face and announced that he was about to seek his virtuous and seemly cot. . . . Figures uprose one by one and passed out into the dry and pallid night. Bertie Cotton was one of the last to pull himself together. The little man appeared to discover Bleak's boots. His eyes lingered upon them interminably and then climbed the ankles, shins, knees, belt, shoulders—in unblinking tension.

"Hello, Bertie." Bleak's voice was that of a man down and done.

Bertie Cotton snorted and passed out.

IV

At dusk on the second evening following, Bleak stepped into Nig Fantod's bar and layout from the camp street. Saunter is the usual word, but there wasn't a saunter left in Sodom. Nig's place was empty—and the Eye baleful.

"Come on—get in the game. Start somethin', Bleak—"

"I've still got my cocoa bean—"

"I'm sick for the sound an' feel of work. See where your luck is with my money—"

He shoved across the layout thirty silver dollars. Bleak started to play, and the old properties and sensations of the game surged about him—except for the occasional pang that he was playing for nothing.

He couldn't lose. For years he had been faithful to the Old Luck Lady, and she had kept her face turned away. Now she had come home to his arms to die. Bleak became enraptured with the hour, the night and the abiding passion of chance.

Villagers, a pair, entered, perceived the trend of affairs and departed in swift silence.

Bleak had not seen them. Nig Fantod was puzzled only for a moment. His first thought was that the wet placer was dead indeed when a man flaring with strange fortune, and piling up the increment of the same, was not enough to hold the vagrant eye. This was the lull before the swarm. The two, finding honey, had gone to fetch the others. . . . The whole camp crept in and ranged around.

Bleak felt the crowd, but only at first among the vague exteriors of his enthralled consciousness. There was a persistent gonging in his mind—but with each passing second it became harder to break the spell, harder to confess that he was playing for fun. What an explanation for a gambler!

Nig's lone eye played upon the board with a soft fury. There was an ecstasy of sensation for him as well—to spend all his evil luck where it cost nothing. He rattled the boxes, and cashed the other's bets with studied gameness.

The Old Lady now sprang new angles, her full quiver of tricks. She danced like a witch to Bleak's decisions; answering his farthest whim in the very fashioning of the conception. She was a marvel of acquiescence, shamelessly flaunting his. And Bleak was winning dollars faster than dreams make

them, in the hot dry dawns of the gambler.

Nig, whose original idea was to attract a maverick dollar or two, now held with brooding horror the thought of someone else breaking in and following Bleak's streak. But Sodom had been true to Lazarus. Fortitude Lerch, the only man with money, wouldn't gamble, even now.

To Bleak it was like the moment at the end of the race. He was out of his body, and subtler senses penetrated the back of the decks as if they were glass and not a villainous opaque red. Black and red and court—he knew them as friends in a brilliant uncurtained house. His falterings here and there were second thoughts when the poor human brain broke into the game and spoiled the inspiration.

He called in exact order the last three cards of the deck, and looked up into the faces of his townsmen.

There were about thirteen gentlemen present—eager and impatient as a picket line of cavalry horses when the forage wagons drive in.

Roughly, Bleak owed every man present. And he *realized* now—that it was too late to speak. Honor and affiliation shone upon him from the faces of men. This was his highest dream of earth conquest—to make the men of Sodom look at him so. Cold sweat broke from him. Nig was ready to begin again.

Bleak felt it. He was regarded as a Baptist, as a Messiah—as one who caused payday to dawn out of due time—the Savior after the brutal worldliness of the Lazarus defeat. He felt the thoughts of men—that he had found a dollar somewhere and brought it to Sodom's ancient despoiler. A veritable Excalibur this dollar, a bank-breaking dollar, and Bleak's winnings were Sodom winnings—such was the mental licking of chops that Bleak felt in the air. Nig Fantod was unloved. Bleak and his dollar had been chosen to vanquish him. It was the prettiest and most fateful excellence that had ever befallen Sodom.

Bleak was held in agony to the game. He could not speak now. He must lose

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—lose before the eyes of men. The baleful Eye was merely using him to attract others. The damnable word "decoy" burned in Bleak's mind. None of these things had come to him as he began. And he owed every man. . . .

All he knew now was that he must end it. He gathered his whole pile and played it on the color of the next card. Nig's eye roved from face to face. All the men were passionately absorbed in Bleak. The banker covered the money with exasperating leisureliness, and this remark:

"The bank's done, gents—all but the stage ride up to Nineveh—"

Bleak couldn't see, in the biting suspense. The lantern went red and unearthly. It was almost against nature to hope that he had lost, yet he knew it was not so. The layout ran before his eyes as Nig unclasped the card. The roar in his ears—break of the terrible tension that tore a shout with it from every throat—gave him the hideous assurance. His legs weakened and he heard the soft, unctuous laugh of Nig Fantod:

"I'm glad you're playin' my money, Bleak."

The shout stopped like a live thing—felled.

"It's right, fellers," Bleak whimpered. "I was only playin' Nig's stake to pass the time. Not a notch in the milling—belongs to me—"

He lifted the blanket by the corners, and rolled back to the banker the hundreds of dollars in gold and silver.

Bertie Cotton disappeared as the first verbal volleys began to give way to a ragged but deadly skirmish fire. Out into the dark he ran. Five minutes later he was fumbling through his blanket roll in the dark of his shack, and produced a small leather bag, with which he hastened back.

Bleak stood against the wall, head bared and bowed before the smoking ironies of the company. Bertie borrowed an empty cigar box and placed it on the table near him of the persecutions. Then he drew the latch of the leather bag, and noisily emptied the holdings into the cigar box. This he tendered to Bleak.

"Play with 'em all you want, Sheriff—but not for keeps," he said witheringly.

Bleak had lost any idea of his own innocence. It did not occur to him to explain that he had been victimized; that he had begun the thing alone with the gambler. His old terror for words kept him dumb. He stood against the wall, dying the death of shame, with the box of marbles in his hand. . . .

The concentration of his persecutors was broken at last by the far roar of Gibson, the stage driver. A stranger was seen to bend himself almost double in the spook-calling dimness of the stage-coach lantern, and emerge to the sand in front of Nig's place. The crowd parted at the door to let him in. He was tall, lean and far beyond his youth.

"Who's Sheriff here?" he asked, clearing his throat.

Bleak's hand wobbled the box; his lips moved, but he made no sound. He was as one turned out—stricken with venom and driven from the hive. It did not come to him that he could be wanted in his real capacity. This was fresh disaster. The stranger stared at him.

"Honest—that's the Sheriff," Bertie Cotton declared, with the wit that drives unerringly at weakness.

"Wot's eatin' him—family dead or just likker?" the stranger asked.

"I'm all right," said Bleak.

"And you're the feller that brought the roll from down here to bet on the Lazarus hoss?"

"Yes."

"You're the Sheriff—it ain't just a nickname?"

Bleak put down the box, and leaning forward, clutched the shoulder of the newcomer. "If you've got business with me—start something," he said.

Everybody felt better. Sodom had it on Bleak, but not the world in general.

"I was only waiting for you to come to," the other said, wincing. "My name's Renney, and I'm from Finchville, and I own Miss Mincing—the same bein' at large with a hoss thief named Larry—"

Bleak felt strangely lifted. Here was a task to take him out of Sodom, until Sodom could forget. There would be a

reward. . . . The crowd forgot everything now but the deadly crime. Sodom was not composed of horsemen, but the earlier days had permeated the settlement with wrath for this particular offense. Men are apt to be religious about unwritten laws.

"Tell me about this here Larry," said Bleak.

"You saw him?"

"Sure. He knew what he had. He rode her. His conduct was modest an' winnin'-like—"

"Gents," said Renney, "I've brung thet boy up, an' he's a sarpint. . . . Sheriff, he'll smile at you modest and winnin' and put a knife through your spleen. That's what he does best—that modest and winnin' comportment. Never raises his voice, drunk or sober; looks at you beguileless as a child—"

"Ready to shoot, is he?" Bleak asked professionally.

"Never sleeps."

"Shoot straight?"

"Sheriff—I hate to tell ye—but he is just that full of hell. And quick—"

"He seems to love that young mare," observed Bleak, who felt that shooting as a topic was exhausted.

"Like a woman. . . . You see, he took care of her latterly. She was cared for. I arise to state, she was cared for, gents—"

"She showed it up in Nineveh," remarked Nig Fantod.

"Gents," said Renney with emotion, "she ain't just natchurl—that filly. Pure steel dust—finer'n split silk. Why, I'd let that filly walk on me—"

He was on the verge of breakdown. Nig moved around back of the bar—and Renney flowed thither with the general tendency. In the great sorrow of the moment, all drank with the unfortunate.

"Larry said he was goin' back North," Bleak observed later.

"Just moved out of sight thetaway," Renney observed—"circled around the town and back down here, crossing the river. He'll pick up a race here and there over yonder in Mexico. He came from there, an' that's his game—"

There was no denying that this was the likely plan of the horsethief. He

had doubtless passed Sodom far to the east on the mesa and crossed the lower ford of the Cabezo in the night.

"Thar's two Mexican trails to follow—Santo Tomas and San Miguel," said Bleak. "You take one, and I'll take the other." Then he added delicately: "But our treasury is some—"

"Me an' Finchville is interested in eight hundred dollars' worth of reward for the mare—an' I sure won't see a sheriff go out on the prospect of gettin' shot through an empty stomach and no place to lie up in—"

"Life sure must have been cruel to you, mister," said Bleak.

V

"KILLJOY," said Bleak at dawn next morning (the name of Renney had fallen into swift disintegration over night), "we'll make the fords together, and at the fork over yonder near Maldonado toss a penny to see who takes San Miguel an' who takes Santo Tomas. That is, if one of us ain't stricken with some horrible spell o' sickness before we reach the fork."

"You're bound to get wet feet fordin' the Cabezo," Bertie Cotton added gloomily.

The horseman from Finchville was too enfeebled in darkness to catch the frivolity of these remarks. Bleak now observed:

"It don't appear reasonable none to set forth on these here proceedin's—"thout a touch o' steam from Nig." At the bar, he added brokenly to the Sodomese: "If I get the hot trail, fellers, I'll bring back that greaser kid an' the filly, too. All them small matters accruin' will be settled *pronto*—"

Bertie Cotton could not forbear: "Don't gamble none for keeps, Sheriff."

The two departed on foot in the brightness of the mesa. The penny chose Bleak for the San Miguel trail, and his heart came slowly back, as the tines of the fork widened between him and the miserable Renney. They had arranged a certain itinerary, and a rough plan of connecting by telegraph, in case either

trail became hot. In any event, they would open communication at the end of six weeks, between the two big towns for which the trails were named.

Bleak hadn't been ten days down San Miguel way before the various signs accumulated into conviction that he had chosen the warm trail. The little brown mare had passed this way—at least, had touched the main trail at certain points. It was desolate going. The gregarious Bleak was worn with solitude. Sodom and all that pertained clutched his heart from the now remote aspect, like the voice of a loved woman. Long since had he been resurrected from the death he had died from shame. Bleak saw himself leading Miss Mincing home to Sodom, the roped prisoner astride. He heard his own voice modestly explaining to his fellow citizens how he had trailed Larry down, made the capture and brought back the best runner in the Southwest, straight up and unmaimed on her superlative legs. And the bow he would make upon the delivery of the eight hundred . . . Bleak always cleared his throat at this point of the dream; for he would lead the men to the bar, and across. There would be no moaning there. He would say—this was the climactic moment: "Fellers, I hate to talk business, but there's ten or eleven little accounts here. . . ." And then he would point out each man that he owed, always suggesting that the amount was less than he thought, meditating on the possible error. . . . The precious wine of the home town's adulation would warm his heart from the picture—and he would suddenly discover the sandy trail running like a torrent beneath him, so quickened had he become with these matters. He was badly gun-marked. From belt to thigh, his big six-shooter had ground him in the days of grit and sweat and furious heat.

A pony was purchasable in any town, but it was a land of costly saddles. He could retain his front as a sheriff from Arizona by saying he had abandoned his pony, but never by breaking into town on a cheap saddle. So, deeper and deeper he strode on foot into the Mexican mountains, listening for a horse race.

News of war did not cover ground, nor travel more rapidly, than the word of freshly matched ponies. A new village every night—and usually an added word of the little brown mare. Larry had traveled fast—that was the difficulty.

Apart from the worry that the boy might take it into his head to break for the East, into Killjoy's jurisdiction, Bleak stuck to the belief that he would eventually overhaul his game. . . . In due course dawned the day of fate, which began with a long and terrible journey. A range of hills, marked at daybreak, appeared no closer in the dreadful burning of midday. He may have misunderstood the Mexican's directions, or possibly, in blinding pressure, missed the trail. He was caught in a vindictive valley, deeply and hotly sanded, as if to keep the sky from breaking into flame from the furnace of earth.

Bleak drank his last drop of water in this furious noon, and staggered on, not comprehending that he was on his feet when many another would have fallen. He was young, strong, and had been physically unhurt. He suffered until he could suffer no more; then a new door of torture swung upon him. Still he would not fall. The far hills wavered before his eyes—with prayers that were visible, and which moved in company with his mother's countenance, his father's whip and the mock worlds of boyhood, when he was the butt of other communities. Sodom, the nearest in fact, was the farthest in the picture during those unspeakable hours. Bleak knew only that he must not fall; that the sand would grill him if he stretched out upon it, as a fish tossed into a basket of hot stones. He drew the barrel of his pistol from the holster, and thumped his thighs with the butt, and tried to keep his tongue in his mouth. . . . The shadow of the man grew longer; he made guttural noises to it—watched it wobble the pistol. Never once did this innocent realize that he was prodigious; and not once did he think of blowing out his brains. . . . They found him at dusk at the edge of the little village Arcola. And lo, there was a woman in that village.

They bore him to a hammock, at the

crook of the veranda, where the south wind turning the corner of the old stone *fonda* moved softly like the breath of a child. Bleak was just one-tenth of a ton, charged with queer animations but no brain, and without fleshly feeling. Doubtless the spirit of the man was taxed with many agonies to remain, but Bleak's consciousness was not among them.

The woman, Isobel, sat beside the hammock and made her dream. Years before, when she was browner and bare-legged, the old priest of Arcola, placing his hand upon her head, with shut eyes, had promised that a stranger would come to her from the North—a stranger to fill her life and be very much her own heart property. The priest may have seen Bleak coming in the mysterious distances of mystic vision, or he may merely have noted Isobel's strangeness. However, he was a pure old man. From that hour the maid and woman had regarded the Mexican boys with an open-and-shut incisiveness of understanding that stripped them of the last shred of romance. She penetrated their vanities and deviltries and laughed at their passions; for she saw in other women what came of giving way to the early whirlwinds. The nearest thing in English to the name Isobel had earned in her own village was "the Frost" (*la Helada*). As usual, the men were wrong—for she had fires to burn the *pueblo*. She was merely strange in undertaking to master her own ignitions.

La Helada had waited for her stranger. And he had come with the grand unconsciousness of a conqueror.

The men of Arcola were not so rapier-keen for her now. Isobel was twenty-four, and in a land where women bloom early, and the early bloom of women is the madness of men. . . . There had been one—he had come down to woo from the big *rebaño* in the hills between Arcola and Arecibo—and failing to win, had tried to spoil her for all other adventures of the heart by cutting out her eye. Yes, he had made her fight to be free. The story of this encounter was written in whitish welts upon La Helada's cheek-bone, but only the strangers noted it now. Arcola forgot the scars but not the story.

The woman had forgotten neither. The Mexican had never returned to Arcola; still, Isobel believed she would kill him in life's good time.

And now she sat in the darkness by the hammock of the stranger, lifting his head to wet his lips with wine and water every little while; and often bathing his eyes and forehead with water cooled in the swinging gourd, which was covered with moistened cloth. Her younger sister Marie dared not come near.

From the first Isobel had acted astonishingly in behalf of the near-dead white man. It was she who had found him, when he had fallen at the edge of the village. (She had tolerated her father's hands only to assist her in carrying him to the hammock.) The *fondista* was not permitted even to find out what the stranger possessed, though God knew he kept a hotel, not a hospital; and God knew Arcola was not what it was for keeping a *fonda*. God knew much about the old man's business—by his manner of speaking. The daughter had stared him into miserable silence, and slapped Marie's cheek, because she laughed at the stranger's beard. *La Helada*, drudge and man hater!

The stars cleared, the moon rose and the woman drew nearer, rapt in realization. . . . He had come. He would live. He would take her away. They would be rich. The rest of the great world, with its cities, seas and furious sounds, would be theirs to conquer. Times Isobel had almost ceased to believe in the terrifying distances and rumors of civilization beyond Arcola. . . . There would be no beatings, no drunkenness, no herd watchings. Had she not been faithful; had she not waited? And when she became absolutely *sure* there would be no beatings nor drunkenness—how she would serve him! Always! No other woman should come near him. That was the only safe way. Not even Marie. This was a new anguish. He must take her away from Marie very soon. For Marie had grown up. She had become the very essence of contagion to the heart malady of man.

At that moment, though the elder sister did not know, she was desolating the

heart of a lover who waited afar for Marie at the edge of the village. The very cross and petulant younger sister could not steal forth with La Helada there at the door guarding her gift from heaven. In the usual course, Isobel would have been in her room. The *sondisto* was long since asleep. God knew, it was trouble enough to stay awake most of the day. Surely everything was amiss since the absurd, bearded *extranjero* appeared. . . . It wasn't that Marie cared much for this particular lover. There were plenty of others. But there was that in her young blood that answered the light o' the moon. The season of warm, humid sweetness, which drives out the nun from a woman's soul, was upon her. Her breast ached for adventure. Sleep belonged to another life; so Marie could only watch from the upper balcony and weary herself with rage and restlessness.

Bleak heard a woman's far singing; and concluded he had died and gone to heaven. He was disinclined to open his eyelids for the present. It might not be heaven; at least, suffering was over for the time. . . . What a day was that which had killed him! He shuddered. . . . The singing stopped.

VI

A HAND touched his forehead. His head was lifted and the sharp scent of fermented grapes quickened—before the cup of water and wine touched his lips. . . . And so the angels talked Spanish! Here was incentive for perfecting the language, that he had never known on the border.

Curiosity now dominated for an instant. Through half-drawn lids he saw the leaning woman, the three-quarter moon partially eclipsed by her hair. He was quite willing to appear to lapse into depths again after drinking, but the woman had caught the glint of his eyes. Bending very near, she began to ask soft questions in Spanish. Queerly, he understood her very well. Once, when he had drunk too much *ron blanco* in Sodom, he had talked Spanish like a native, even

anticipating the drift of voluble offerings before they were half delivered. Was this heaven like that?

"What is this town?" he asked after a moment.

"This is little Arcola, señor."

Then he asked many absurd things about how he got there, and into the hammock, and if this were a hospital.

Isobel replied.

"But why are you taking care of me?"

"Because I choose to—"

"Ah—"

"Will you have your supper now?" she asked presently.

Bleak had just met the palpitating thought: Had he been robbed? A man always associates robbery with a strange woman. His hand slid under his blue shirt to the place where the wallet was kept.

"I would not let them touch it," she said.

At least, heaven was not unlike Arcola. . . . There was something blessedly authoritative about the woman's voice and presence. Certainly this was not the panic with which he had met other women. Bleak was sure he would do well to do as this woman said. This was the sane, sick-man trend. He was presently awake to the romance, wide as the night and the stars.

"Will you have your supper now?" she asked again.

Bleak had not eaten since dawn; yet his raw throat and cracked lips still held his mind in abasement before the fact that there was actually cool liquid in the world. He had been close to death. Every muscle trembled; waves of nausea deluged him from time to time. He said he could not eat that night—and the woman left him.

He felt vividly alone, realizing now that one instinctive reason why he wanted no supper was that she would have to leave him to get it. In going, the woman became of the world, the last vestige of the heaven illusion vanishing. . . . He saw the huts lying in black under the moon. One slender tree had foliage like a cluster of pine shavings. Now and then a firefly opened its shutter; and except for a certain treed insect that emitted the occa-

sional drone of a far sawmill, there was a progressive stillness that warned him of suffering hours to come. . . . There had been moments of heaven. He never would be quite the same, having had them. This came queerly: "I'll never fight for life again, as I did today.

"My God!" he muttered, in the awe of finding something almost too good to be true. "She is coming again."

It was true. She brought a pitcher of milk.

"This will be good for you. It is food and drink," she said. "I did not think you could take food tonight."

Bleak slowly originated the idea that the woman was food and drink. Exactly that, and something more—but he was far from saying so. . . . In his weakness, his eyes smarted. The symptom was so remote in his experience that he tried to make himself believe he had no tears. The next thing she said brought some forth:

"It is cooler here. You had better not rise for the present. I will not leave you—unless you wish."

Something gave way up on the balcony. Bleak heard a sigh with a savage quirk at the end. Isobel did not refer to the matter. With large labor and humility he got this sentence together:

"You are certainly good to me, señora. What time is it?"

"It's midnight—and after."

"But you mustn't stay here," he exclaimed. "I was wonderin' at the look of the moon—thinkin' that it was just after supper time."

"Don't trouble about what I must do," La Helada said quietly. "I'll take care of you."

Bleak began at the horse race and followed events carefully until he had fallen in the afternoon. There was nothing like this in his experience, nothing like it in the world before. He was awed. . . . Now he remembered his debts and his work. In no way had he made ready for the woman's coming. Nothing about him was fitly prepared. Yet he couldn't let her go. The simplest thing when unpleasant thoughts follow each other too rapidly is to fall asleep. Bleak did this, and awoke holding the woman's hand.

"You twitch so," she said.

VII

THE wood of the room had a dark, waxy look. Everything was sharply clean—except Bleak, who felt the need of many waters. He rose to strange discovery. . . . Could he have changed rooms in the night? Six-shooter and holster lay within reach of his hand, but his clothes were gone. In their stead was white clothing of a man easily equal to Bleak's girth, but a foot shorter. Even the garment of the wallet was gone. Upon such instigations, the memories of the night and of his nurse now flocked. White birds were these. He could not be dismayed altogether.

He shoved the door slightly, and a flood of bird music arose from below. At the far end of the low hall was the bench, with the soap bar and the water jars. He appeared to have "gangway." Sunlight came in through the vines that trailed from the low-hanging eaves. Only bare feet could make a wooden floor shine back at the sun, as did that dark ancient wood. In the open bath corner, the floor was tiled and graded to drain itself. Bleak risked it. . . . As he bent toweling, moments afterward, his heart suddenly melted at a sight below. On the ropes back of the *fonda* his clothing hung, all washed and drying. . . .

In his room later, he was drawn by a light rapping. The hand against the panel outside prevented him from opening wide; the wallet was thrust through the slight aperture. A narrow yellow ribbon was tied about the leather. Nothing within had been touched. A moment later his coffee followed in the same manner. These services helped Bleak to organize. It would be easy to get into such habits, he thought. . . . The vines breathed sweet fragrance, and a fountain of happiness gushed upward from the aviary.

A singular repose had come to Bleak in the midst of his general weakness, except for a certain inchoate and windy feeling below the knees. His wrists, too, emerged from the short-sleeved coat like formidable foreign members. . . . A gurgle of soft laughter from an unseen place raked him like a spur, but it was silenced

by a ringing slap. The woman of the dark hours came forth. She did not lift her eyes in murmuring her greeting, but touched his elbow, directing him to the hammock.

She was slender and supple of movement—dark brows and darker lashes made her cheeks seem fair. Bleak was speechless. Had she been withered and shapeless, he would have been emotional from gratitude—but this splendid, mysterious woman! . . . She took him to the hammock again, brought eggs and cakes and more coffee to a wicker table at the side.

The *fondista* came forth, bowing to his bet. From certain corresponding individualities of the clothes he now wore and the figure of the man before him, Bleak recognized the owner; and from a certain richness of the eyes and fineness of feature in suggestion rather than fact, he also recognized the father of a woman. . . . The good God knew, it was one more hot day. The *fondista* remarked this tentatively. He appeared to accept an immortal obligation since Bleak agreed. . . . Who was he, God knew, that the illustrious stranger should honor his meager and altogether impossible house?

This was rather a deep question. In brief and general terms, however, Bleak expressed that the pleasure was all his. A cigarette and cigar were now lit, and both offered. Bleak felt strange foreign flourishes in his arms and back, as he accepted the shorter smoke. The conviction now formed that Arcola had been expecting a messiah, and that his coming had fulfilled the prophecy. The strength of this idea precluded the mentioning of horse races for the present. . . . Amenities lagged; wine was brought; the *fondista* withdrew from the glorified circle of his guest to the humbler shadows of the wine room. . . . At intervals there was the shine of radiant eyes from the shadowed doorway. By means of a series of hooks, the hammock followed the shade of the wide stone porch, and the elder sister sat by.

Bleak had come home to his own country. There was a *lull* in the soft, hot air, in the cigarettes, in the wine and food,

the length of day, the voice and services of the woman . . . only the far-off laughter of Marie was disturbing, and the voices of the young men who approached, in the shadows of evening—the slim young men who circled around the big American as jackals about a honey-gorged bear.

Three or four days passed like a dream. Night seemed to awaken the village. In the cool of dawn the ox carts would go by, at dusk returning, the weary drivers goading viciously with their long steel-pointed poles. Then the naked babies would come forth in the settling dust, and the maidens. Here and there in a doorway you would know by the flare of a match that a youth was watching the señoritas, as he inhaled his cigarette. . . . The younger sister was as a prepared vessel for the eternal miracle.

Bleak's heart was unerringly drawn to the elder, but he often watched Marie, his matchmaking instinct awakened. She was rightly alive only in the dusks, but Isobel was a tireless saint in the days—and a princess ineffable for the evenings.

As Arcola differed from Sodom, so Isobel was different from those women he had known and feared. She had broken the spell of his sex separateness. She had found him *helpless*. In everything she was wiser and more cunning than he expected; each day she was a new Isobel with stronger, stranger entwinements.

"Sodom is sure a sort o' hell alongside o' this here Arcola," Bleak mused.

And yet Sodom now called him like an unfinished task. Bleak didn't know exactly why, but Sodom was his arena. One can only detach one's self from such by conquering all comers. Bleak had not begun to conquer; and here in Arcola his natural lassitude had been warmed and fed. Days drew on into ten before he was roused. Even his dreams had been too weak to sustain the future, and indolence had clothed the hopes of tomorrow. Of course, he had been badly burned, body and brain, on that terrible day; one is not swiftly restored after such suffering. But La Helada made him over anew; and it was she who gave

him the first inkling that life had whipped him badly. Not that she discovered any failing. She would not have listened, with mercy for the teller, to any story of his defeats. Bleak was brought home to the dingy shanty of self, because the woman believed it to be a spacious mansion.

The mail carrier had come in from the Southwest and was refreshing himself in the wine room with the *fondista*. Bleak heard the word "*caballo*." Of course there were other horses besides the little steel-dust mare that Killjoy had lost, but the word started Bleak to swimming out of somnolence. This is what he heard from the pleasant gloom among the casks:

"... The young man's horse is very pretty. He has consented to race Delcante's *Beata*. Of course he does not expect to win. His mount is very young and untried, you know—but he has some money—and the race is to be run in Arecibo—"

So much was the pith of an hour's fine print conversation over *vino Jerez* of age and good report. . . . Bleak was deeply shaken by the luck of the thing: Arecibo was not on the main trail to San Miguel. He would have been a hundred miles south on the road to San Miguel now—had it not been for the woman and the desert. Arecibo was thirty miles over the hills to the southwest. . . . The name "Larry" was not mentioned, but the picture in the mail carrier's mind balanced the one in Bleak's; except that the man who brought this race to Arecibo was not spoken of exactly as a stranger.

All day, as he lay in the hammock, Bleak's thoughts were on the trail again. If tomorrow were fine, he would set out for Arecibo. That night he shut the door of the wine room upon himself and the *fondista* and asked for his "how much?"

The old man looked humiliated, rubbed his hands in emotion, and sank his head between his shoulders. Disavowing Bleak's language altogether, he prayed to be allowed to go forth upon his life business. God knew, he was dismayed with honor already. . . . Bleak went back to his hammock quite undone. The

day and its climax had been keen. La Helada came and sat down beside him.

"I heard you," she said. "Why did you not tell me?"

"I was going to—now."

"Why did you tell him first?"

"It was the simple matter of the account."

"Do you think I would let you pay in my house?" she asked. "What is mine is yours."

Bleak contemplated the ten days.

"But your father keeps the inn—"

"Bah—it is mine, too. . . . You should have told me first. Why do you go to Arecibo?"

Bleak was staring up at the sagging and ancient tiles, worn from erosion, that overhung the porch. He was about to answer flippantly, but felt the burn of blood in his cheek, and knew that she was watching him with intensity. He now spoke carefully regarding the matter that had brought him to Mexico.

"And you think this is the man?"

"Yes."

"But he may kill you."

La Helada said it calmly as one of the remoter chances. Bleak had tried to deal lightly with this exigency to Killjoy, and had failed so deplorably that he was disposed to be tender on the subject.

"I won't give him no chance," he said. "I've come a long ways to corral that kid. He's quick as a dart an' full of tricks as a monte deck—but I'll see him first—"

The woman had expected him to disdain the idea of trouble. Bleak felt her sudden feverishness, saw her eyes gathering brightness in the early night.

"Why don't you say you are going to take me?" she demanded.

Bleak sat up. He tried to speak, but his throat wasn't ready.

"Why don't you speak?"

"Come on—let's walk," he said hoarsely.

They walked out to the end of the village, and there were no words until she halted at the place where she had found him.

VIII

BLEAK was crippled by the idea that he had done her some injustice. From

the first day, he had expected to come back to Arcola. He told her so.

"Men always say they will come back," said La Helada.

"Not me—I never said it to a woman before," Bleak replied desperately, far from knowing what an inspiration it was.

She was a tropical woman again, effulgently feminine and close to tears.

Bleak told her in his continually surprising Spanish of his debts in Sodom, and of the race in Nineveh.

"This reward will help out," he added. "Then I'll come back to Arcola. . . . And—"

He struggled with idioms. Literally translated, his final sentence was: "You can gamble regardless on the fact that I'll sure come back hotfoot."

"But why leave me? I would not be a burden to you."

Bleak thought of taking a native bride to Arecibo—to arrest a horsethief. In the first place, public expectation was booted and spurred for a horse race. A stranger coming in to stop this was on the wrong road to become a town idol. . . . He told her he wasn't ready—that he must make good before he returned to her. His stress appealed vitally. Bleak could not know that his strength and resistance and words were a bath of power to her. "This ain't no pleasure trip," he finished. "I haven't earned you yet. Besides, we need the reward—"

Her voice trailed up to him sweetly now:

"I've been waiting years for you—waiting lonely, waiting all alone—"

"Waitin' for me, lady?"

La Helada made her confession then—what the old priest had said. It was Bleak's initiation into the greater mysteries. Sometimes a boy, sometimes a monarch, he was before her. All the tyranny of Sodom passed from him, and a novel and lifting sense of self and reality came.

"I knew the first minute—you had me," he said brokenly. "Nothing like it ever came my way till I hit Arcola. I'm all turned around. . . . Everything that seemed big—seems little—and you—so little—you're—"

He had to finish in English—"the whole works."

"*Whole wor-ksa?*" she repeated in ecstasy.

"*Todo mundo,*" he finished briefly.

"Ah!" she said, laughing. . . . And then he saw the moonlight on her face, and the delayer lost himself at last in the lovely passion of it all.

IX

LA HELADA watched him go.

Never in her life had she been given the slightest reason to trust the word of man, except on the one matter of the priest's visioning—but such a good priest isn't a man when he's old. . . . She knew she was to suffer now. Her father spoke to her with great care and delicacy. Marie did not speak at all, but her thought was: "He will never come back."

La Helada felt that thought. It burned her, filled her with hatred. Since Marie held her peace, however, there was nothing to say or do. . . . Bleak was within view of the upper balcony for more than an hour. Her thoughts flew over his few words. All his words had moved in the same way; all had meant that he was simple and true and needed her. He did not express gladness and gratefulness in the way of her people—but still with peculiar charm for her heart. And yet, Isobel, who had waited so long, felt the old fires of her being flame higher than ever. The American had filled her emptiness. Halls of her heart rang with lamentations now, less because of the absence of a day or two than because of her own doubts and the limitations of the male, to which she could not be blind. This was emptiness intolerable.

Into the Southwest toward Arecibo Bleak made his way all that day. It was partly a river journey, and the trail was clear. The mail carrier made it back and forth every ten days. A bit of jungle; a stream, crowded with life; dim coolness in the hollows between the hills, flash of birds and the clap of heavy leaves, the calling clinging mystery of La Helada

who loved him—Larry, the steel-dust mare, Killjoy, telegraphs, rewards, Arcola-and-the-nights again—then northward and the world's work, and the world's woman.

Work was salubrious in the distance. Bleak would never again be shiftless nor uncentered. There was something to work for: the respect of Sodom; but more than that—the respect of the woman. He had this now. But he must keep it. That's the trick. . . . Thirty miles—it was not long except for the occasional pang that every step widened the distance between him and the woman. Once he laughed aloud at the way it had all come about. Ten days before and he had been one of the many alone who do not know what life means, nor what work is for—lonely mavericks who lean on the opinions and the institutions of men. Then he had fallen. Close to death and with all his wits away—she had stolen upon him, come into his heart to live. He pictured himself coming to the *fonda* at Arcola in his usual health, taking his supper and wine in desperate self-consciousness, knowing the eyes of the girls were watching from the shadows.

"If I'd drunk enough wine," he mused, "I might have dared to look at one of them—probably at that little spitfire Marie. Oh, Lord, I wouldn't have known Isobel! A feller has to be knocked silly to see a real woman! . . . An' she wanted to come along—"

No, the thirty miles were none too long. Bleak was just a little awed by this fresh acquaintance with himself.

He reached the town in the dusk. Arecibo was on the travel lines. Business had not departed from this *fonda*. There were voices in the room of rum, and a hall in which the smell of garlic blended with that of cocoa butter with an almost pre-destined affinity. Bleak drew the proprietor aside to inquire about the horse race. All that the mail carrier had brought was good word and true. . . . And where was this horseman, and the little brown mare?

The innkeeper drew him to the rear porch, and pointed through the twilight. Bleak saw a trail that began at the low-

est stones of the porch and joined another in the immediate distance. He was told to follow the other until he came to a certain stable set in the side of a hill, the lamp of which would be visible before he arrived. . . . The innkeeper offered to send a member of his household, but Bleak allowed he could find the place. He asked if the horseman camped there with his runner. The innkeeper replied that the two were seldom apart.

Bleak resolved to bathe and sup before setting out to turn the point of his mission.

An hour later, at the bend of the trail behind the *fonda*, he saw the light, and made for it through the almost starless dusk of early evening. . . . The stable was dug out, the roof braced with heavy and ancient timbers. The lamp rested on a box near the buttressed opening; and upon the straw, stretched out to the light, was the soft-eyed Larry. He was reading a paper-covered book. It was thus that Lincoln read and learned to rule himself before ruling a nation.

Beyond in the shadows were the round and well remembered flanks of the racing mare, ashine in the feeble gleam. Presently her entire conformation filled the eyes without, her head raised, ears pricked. Her deliciously sensitive nostrils caught something amiss. Larry read on. It was all so snug and content. "Hillside manger in lamplight." . . . "Horsethief at home." . . . "Outlaw improving his mind"—there were many names for the picture.

Larry was faithful to his brown jewel. Miss Mincing was fit as she had been in Nineveh. There was a simplicity about it all that gripped the replenished soul of the Sheriff. His heart began to thump, not with fear but with a softer emotion of pity. It was shame to take Larry so easily. There would be no interest in a telling of this sort. . . . And the boy looked so happy. Perhaps he really loved the little steel-dust mare. Bleak winced. The four weeks' trailing were forgotten in the queer combustible faculties he carried. Perhaps Larry loved a girl somewhere and was out defying men, in order to make a stake for her. Bleak's throat was dry. He hadn't

cared much for Killjoy at best. The three hundred miles of search were erased from Bleak's mental map at that moment.

Miss Mincing could stand the strain no longer. She snorted softly. It was like blowing through a tube into a bowl of water. Now at Bleak's left in the thicket the forgotten saddle pony nickered. Larry rose, and Bleak faced him at the door.

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

"Before we talk, son," said Bleak, "I'll take this little shooter of yours, an' the knife—more accordin' to custom than hard feelin's, though I did hear a whole lot about your slick handlin' of same—since that last drink in Nineveh."

Larry fell back to a crouch, lip lifted, elbows out, his two hands queerly stretched and poised over his hips. There he stood for an instant, the impression sinking into Bleak's brain of something deadly, catlike, un-American. So much of it was in those swift outstretched fingers. Bleak's gun broke the pose.

"Hello, Mister Sheriff! You frighten-a me. What is—matter? What is wanted?"

"You are, my boy—an' your lady friend yonder," said Bleak, who had found an extra knife and a small new-fangled gun, not only a novelty but a reproach to one of Arizona upbringing. It was the pair of knives, however, that helped him to remember his own affairs—Sodom, debts, Arcola, the woman, reward—the knives, and that peculiar drawback into a crouch, and the small wide-stretched knob-tipped fingers.

"We come with you—but what for?" Larry smiled in the old winning way that restored Nineveh and all of its appointments.

Bleak laughed back at him, and followed his eyes to the mare. He couldn't hold hard thoughts and look at her. The arched head of the rare little runner was turned to the boy's voice—turned to the draw of the loose halter. Demurely tentative she was, and playful.

Bleak cleared his voice. "Quit stallin',

Larry," he said, but it wasn't the growl he intended. "Speakin' deferential in the presence of your consort, and acknowledgin' her speed and gameness, you sure wrecked up a home a whole lot to get this lady to go with you—"

"I know not what to speak," Larry said, shrugging his shoulders. "Did she not win fair from Lazarus-old-horse?"

"True for you—she did that."

"Why take knife an' pistol?"

"Now as to that," said Bleak, "that's a pure personality I owe myself, havin' heard you bad spoke of—an' with surprise an' pain."

The mare blew into the bubble bowl again. Larry's eyes danced with a fresh idea. "I see, Mister Sheriff. You come to follow the race—and take back much money."

Bleak smiled in keen enjoyment. "Now that's somethin' I hadn't thought on. If I war a single-minded man—and not sheriff back in the river county—that might appear as an openin' of promise. Seein' as how we stacked up, though, son, we'd better begin to make Arcola—"

"And what of race—day after to-morr?" Larry asked with despair.

"Some folks might say there was a gamblin' proposition on that that remark," Bleak observed. "As fur me, I can't see a chance of a race in the next two days—"

Larry sat up. There was nothing in his look to remind Bleak of that memorable moment of his surprise. Boyish petulance, extreme vexation—but no hell-hot devil was uncovered.

"This is unpleasant, Mister Sheriff," he said deprecatingly.

X

MOMENTS had passed, but the two had not changed positions. Whether there would be a race in Arecibo on the day after tomorrow was now a gambling proposition. Bleak was fluctuating, or rather dangling impotently, between his original mission and the cause of Larry. The latter's story had come out without a flaw, to the following effect:

He had worked two years for Renney, of Finchville, a man violently addicted

to horseflesh. A series of calamitous defeats up Tucson way, shortly after Larry's service began, had leveled Renney down to a small string of runners, including some young stock, and a large string of debts, past maturity. It was then that the old man came frankly to his trainer, jockey and stable boy, saying: "Larry, there's no money in the world for wages, and none in sight, so you'd better go." The boy now exposed his passion to own one of the young things of indefinite future which cumbered the herd. Renney wept with delight, as Larry told it.

Miss Mincing, at that time a two-year-old, was bad in front with a splint that lamed her tendons. She was variously delicate as well, and though incomparably bred, was far from coming into her own. Larry told the old man that he would work during a period of eighteen months for his board and the ownership of the brown filly. Renney responded, in accepting, that while the boy could shape up a horse for a race, and sit him through it, he had an eye for horseflesh like a seacock. And that was the extent of the contract.

There was not a moment of the narrative in which Larry made himself appear lamblike, nor emotionally outpouring toward the old man. Absence of this gave the story sanction to Bleak. Larry said he had always seen Miss Mincing as unbeatable. . . . He blistered the splint and turned her loose. She came back to him clean as a new-minted dollar. Then he worked her out—always under a pull, when Renney was about. The latter, who half respected the opinions of his servant, looked for a burst of speed that never was shown—except in certain twilights and dawnings afar from the Finchville paddock. "You're going to have a nice brood mare there, Larry, some time," he said with sarcasm.

In due time Larry was ready to depart. He alone knew how good Miss Mincing had become. Times were now better for Renney, and he offered to pay up Larry's back wages for the maiden.

"Didn't you tell him she was worth too much to you as a brood mare?" Bleak asked at this point.

Larry held himself rigidly to the tale. "He not like for me to go," he finished. "One day a big open race in Las Vegas; he ask me enter Mincing. But I know he make trouble when I win. . . . That was wrong—to race in Nineveh. Mister Renney know Lazarus-old-horse. Always he want to go up and beat that horse."

"What's eatin' this Killjoy? You worked for the filly, an' then fetched her way down here to pick up money he'd never come after—"

Bleak was stopped by the boy's lifted eyelids.

"You don't compr'end, Mister Sheriff. A man raise the horse all his life—then comes one small horse that answer all the worry and care."

"Oh, I see," said Bleak. "It's a disease. All bets, all contracts are off—when a gem is cut. The small item that Killjoy gave you the filly don't count?"

"Mister Renney say I stole filly and send sheriff after," Larry mused pitifully.

Bleak was trying to understand the disease; and making progress. Supposing, his thoughts ran, an old prospector had a bundle of claims along a certain river, and owed his side kicker money he couldn't pay; suppose the side kicker chose one of the claims to cancel the debt—and the claim proved an eldorado . . . yes, it was a test of a man's out-and-out, yes-and-no honesty. . . . And just at this moment Bleak's reflections broke into a realization of explosive character: if Larry could substantiate his story there might not be any reward. . . . La Helada and the nest egg?

Bleak's brain felt bruised and sore.

"It's a good story, young feller," he said, "but really it ain't none of my business. I come here to fetch you back. You can tell 'em up in Finchville. If Killjoy has gone *loco* over you pickin' the proper young one—they'll stand by you up in Finchville. I'm to get you there—"

"And what of race-day after to-morr?"

Bleak was silent. Even in his own disorder he was sorry for the boy.

"Did Mister Renney say—give reward?"

"Sure—eight hundred."

"Hah!" There was a sudden chill in the night air, the way Larry said it. "He think I fight arres'—then you shoot for kill, and take back Mincing mare alone—"

"Hell—I don't shoot careless," Bleak said stiffly.

"Some shoot quick at Mexican boy."

Further silence. They heard the saddle pony cropping nearer, occasionally clearing the dust from his muzzle. There was much far listening on the part of the little mare—as if the distances were filled with messages, which she alone could interpret and only by the utmost concentration.

"Mister Sheriff—these men of Arecibo excite themselves—when you preven' race."

"I've thought of that," said Bleak.

"They ask see papers—*requisitoria*—"

"They're welcome," said Bleak, on pure bluff.

Larry now appeared to dislike the present phase of the matter as much as the American.

"Sugar and coffee planter all come—bring much money," Larry suggested. "Delcante's Beata—a veree good horse."

"Beata as good a horse as Lazarus?" Bleak asked.

"I think—yes," the boy said judicially. "You take four hundred dollars—you make eight—"

"I was waitin' for that thar. It sure was done delicate—"

"I go back with good cheer—day after tommor' afternoon—"

"Do I draw, you might be considerable troublesome—if we started, say, at sun-up tomorrow?"

Larry smiled engagingly, patting his empty holster and knife sheath. His look seemed to say: "Who am I to make trouble for a sheriff from mighty America?" Bleak studied the expression.

"Day after tommor' on our way," Larry said enticingly. "I double on eight hundred—you double on four hundred—"

"Which means you've got twelve hundred in your kick at present?" Bleak said slowly.

Larry's face looked haggard, but he was game.

"Yes," he said.

"You'd better hand it over for bail," said Bleak. "I'll rest better durin' the delay, and then I can run your racin' book—"

Larry rose and went into the stall.

XI

LARRY, in fact, leaped lightly to the manger, and brought forth his fortune. . . . Mentally, Bleak was off the ground. He hadn't looked for this. His talk for the past five minutes had not been personally conducted. The horsethief had handled him. He felt an agonizing need for the woman. He wasn't safe alone. . . . Bleak saw it now. The thought of missing the reward had blown up his feathery wits. He was further scattered by the temptation of the four hundred, which the boy had so softly insinuated. . . . Then here was twelve hundred—American money—that was to be doubled, if he did not insist upon the policy of blind haste. And Bleak believed the story. It was reasonable, and had been done with such decent self-repression.

Larry held out a leather bag.

"You bet money on race, Mister Sheriff—"

"How much is here?" Bleak was merely parrying.

"Twenty - five hundred — Mexican money."

"Sit down and help me count it," said Bleak. His voice was like another's—like Nig Fantod's voice when he was winning. He couldn't keep his mind on the counting. The important and final conception of his performance shaped. He saw it in the dim future as a Sodom classic. He could hear Bertie Cotton talking:

"This here Bleak was sheriff, and went over yonder to get a hossthief. Grand little steel-dust mare—the stolen hoss. Bleak came up with his man two days before the hossthief was pullin' off a race. Say, d'ye s'pose our sheriff was goin' to spoil that hoss race, mister? Not our sheriff! He just took the money away from the outlaw—and handled the racin' book hisself!"

And yet Bleak couldn't reverse. Larry had been game to the seeds—never faltered more than a second. Bleak couldn't see that the temptation was common enough, and that a better man would have carried the fight now into the open. . . . Larry had dazzled him. Together, in the candle light, they counted the money, the amount being as stated.

Throughout the day preceding the race, servants rode down from the hills with the famous straw hats of the planters. These were freshly pipe-clayed in Arecibo and carried back, to return the following day on the heads of the sugar and coffee kings. All the surrounding *haciendas* emptied into Arecibo, which town took on a formal holiday aspect on the morning of the race. Delcante's Beata was well liked and well backed. Bleak was refusing money an hour before the start. . . . All the reds in the world moved in the little plaza—for the señoritas had come forth at last by day.

There was one group of young men, very gaudily dressed, narrow of loin and narrow of eye. They seemed old companions to Larry—the breed from which he had come. They laughed at the brown mare and her chance; appeared to put much silver on Beata; yet were deeply fascinated by the strange runner. . . . Bleak had no cause to complain—neither yesterday, the night before nor last night. Always, Larry had been at hand, quiet, courteous and sorrowful.

Bleak was shattered. For him disaster was in the air. The woman had expected him back last night. Already he was causing the woman to suffer. He could think of everything when it was too late. Some speechless inner entity invariably showed him afterward what a failure he was, carefully weighing his deficiencies of performance. . . . Bleak had deeply realized it was not conducive to his own peace of mind to cause worry for La Helada. He felt that Arcola was disrupted—and the middle distance of Mexico generally.

He had never fallen so far in his own estimation, having climbed recently to new ranges of conduct. The ten days at Arcola had shown him things differently.

He had begun to see that it is more important to keep up one's front for one's self—than for a set of townsmen. Bleak felt the need of making good back in Sodom—but far more to make good for the woman, who was like a better part of him in his thoughts. . . . Yet twelve hours from her kiss he had compromised with the man he was sent after. Little Larry had been too much for him. Bleak had granted his own shortcomings many times, but never with the force and point that drove home now. He saw he had to be made over again; that he wasn't safe to be trusted alone; and thoughts of the woman ached in his breast.

And now Bleak carried the town's money, and the horses were in the sun. Some big disaster was coming. He deserved it, wondered finally if it were not a dream about the woman loving. . . . She had said so. She had waited years. . . . It seemed very far away—that evening of the revelation at the edge of Arcola, when she had told him what the priest said and the sweetness that had come up from her, as if she had gathered strange flowers along the lonely years! . . . It was almost too good ever to come again. He had forfeited the fitness and decency that would bring her to him again. Now that he had not come as promised, she would see it all as it was. She would have watched for his coming last night; today the anguish of expectation would depart; she would not care whether he came. It had all been illusion—the beauty she had seen. He would seek her late tonight—try to make her cherish the old illusion, but it would be strange and alien. . . . He moved about in the crowd, as one in a dream. He was trying to make the woman see that he was the same creature she had loved and tended; that he would try and try again—try until at last he did not fail. . . .

Larry and the Mexican lad riding Beata trotted out to the starting point—three-quarters of a mile down the road. The finish line was in the plaza of the town where the whole population was gathered. Larry's Mexican friends went out to the start with him. They whipped

the lad with taunts. Bleak had watched the little fellow bowed over the brown mare's mane at the last moment. Laughing and quiet—thus he had seen Larry first; thus he was at his best. The old theme of that day in Nineveh played again in Bleak's mind.

He was sure Beata would win. They would go broke together, and hit the trail back to Arcola and beyond. It was not that he did injustice to Miss Mincing in this sense of her defeat. Something would happen to make her lose. For Bleak disaster was in the air.

He heard the high tension of the voices in a distant corner of consciousness. The loss of the woman—his seeking to restore the old illusion, not of his worthiness but of his fierce hunger and need for her—this was nearer. . . . Isobel was not obdurate. She listened but could not understand. It was gone from her—the thing she had seen in him. . . . She was gone from him—this was the tragedy. He had failed once too often—failed after she had shown him the clear, plain way. The least a man can do, he thought, is to be honest. He had fallen before a few cheap complications.

There was a scream from the women. The horses were away. . . . Hundreds craned over the parted path to the finish, where Bleak stood with Larry's money and the town's money heavy in his hand, but heavier in his soul. He saw the far flicker in the dust, just a flicker in the dust—a pair of racing horses—and here was town and country intent with some deep enchantment upon the fiber of them. . . . All his dreams of sickness and the disorder of nights were real, compared to this living mystery of a town at play—terrible at its play. All the color, and every pitch of voice, was unnatural, but the night of the revelation, at the edge of Arcola, and the sweetness of the woman—God, how real were these!

Bleak was cold to the result. He expected to lose. There would be no shame upon the brown mare. Something would happen to make her lose. That was part of the disaster. Perhaps with defeat this doom and dusk would clear from his mind. Perhaps he could find himself then—when this

load of money and nightmarish unreality was lifted. . . . The horses were nearer—like flags blown in a mist. The air was torn and tortured with the voices of the people in frantic holiday tumult. Bleak had never known before the terror of a strange people at play, to an alien who has lost his own. His spirit was tossed in the empty violence of voices.

Silence. It was as if he had sunk into the pelvis of the world—strange light and enchanted silence. He was too far away in thought to catch the real meaning. . . . The woman's face was turned away. She could not understand. . . . Drumming of hoofs. Out of the yellow earth came the brown mare, running low, light—running as if set for a leap—running alone. . . . And the face of Larry flashing by, and the quiet smile.

Bleak ran after the brown mare. Thrice his lips moved before he could find words:

"We must make Arcola tonight—"

"All right, Mister Sheriff," Larry answered, as he hopped down and drew the muzzle of the mare into the hollow of his bridle arm.

XII

GRANTING that Killjoy was now in Santo Tomas, according to schedule, he could reach Arcola (where Bleak had planned to hold Larry and Miss Mincing) within seven or eight days. Part of this journey was by rail. Bleak had already telegraphed. . . . It was not yet three in the afternoon when Larry and the Sheriff set out from the silenced village of Arecibo. The flaring reds and the fresh-clayed hats were gone, but the wine and rum centers were still running the race. The Mexicans were good losers, but the character of the brown mare's winning, her super-equine speed, had left a general feeling of having been looted and shamed.

Larry, riding very light, for he carried neither funds nor arms, and in his racing saddle, was ahead on the gently

cooling *conquistada*. The burdened Bleak rode the buckskin saddle pony. Nearly five hours of daylight were left—enough to see them to the *fonda* at Arcola in the usual course. The only pressure of resistance that Bleak had encountered since Larry furnished his own bail two nights before was now in the matter of speed. The boy held up the mare, insisting that she must cool and get her second wind, before breaking from a walk. He promised to make better time the last half of the journey, and very good time the last five miles. Miss Mincing was not properly a saddle horse, the boy repeated; moreover, she had done her work already this day.

"Thar ain't no disposition here to deny that, son," Bleak said gently. "But you're fussin' up the little lady holdin' her in, it seems to me—who ain't got no authority to tell you a whole lot about hosse."

Larry wasn't irritable at all, but the speed did not increase. Bleak was inclined to be humble before the pair. They had done their work so well; they were finished bread winners, which was more than he. And Bleak was dazed yet from the marvelous finish. Eight hundred of the money in his pocket was his—if he would take it. The decision lodged in his brain. It would neither go in deeper nor emerge. He wanted to ask the woman what to do; yet he knew that a man would decide for himself. It was a bit uncanny to him. He would not have thought it wrong two weeks before; he could have accepted the slightly smutted windfall—even he with his fool's reputation for being honest. But that sort of fluency was strangely crippled in the past few days. . . . It was a cheap thing, this handful of money, compared to what he suffered since the woman's face seemed to turn away.

It struck him now—a possible covenant with himself. He would renounce any part of the Arecibo winnings! Actually there was trace of a smile in the world again! Then the debts in Sodom recurred, the need, the nest egg—and Bleak truckled. He would ask her what to do. . . . You see clearly how

he needed the iron heel; how his case literally challenged it.

They were deep in the river bottom, between five and six in the afternoon—the same jungle which had charmed and astonished the awakened Bleak on the way over. The growths were very thick; coolness and the queer breaks in the silence which birds and leaves made seemed to charm the spirit of the loitering outlaw to a sort of ecstasy.

Bleak watched him curiously, knowing full well they would finish the journey in that utter darkness before the stars really unveil. He did not, however, guess in the remotest way what sub-limate form of hell was back of that tanned and wrinkled brow. . . .

The water was sludgy beneath. Bleak could not deny, even in his anger at dawdling, that the wet marsh was vitality and expansion to the desert-dried hoofs of the little mare. Larry held her for precious moments where the black muck folded about her ankles, and expatiated meanwhile upon a boyhood dream of gold to be found in this hollow between the hills. . . . He had come here long ago. This was his country. In a little village lost to the world in a pocket of hills beyond Arecibo he had first regarded the light and found it excellent, but the darkness better. He had ranged all these hills with herds as a boy. . . . God, how he had hated sheep! God, how he had loved horses! . . .

Larry appeared to talk to the little mare quite as much as to Bleak, who sauntered behind leading the saddle pony. He petted her, praised her running—talked of days spent together, and of days to come.

Bleak was wondering if the little things of speech like this would hold a woman's heart—a laborious idea for him. He did not offer his decision as world truth, but he finally concluded that Miss Mincing would have loved the jungle journey more had she been a woman. . . . That was it—they were kids excursioning together, Larry and the brown mare. Leaves and water, shadows, birds and coolness—all were fun for them; and how they could pull together when a race was to be run!

The pair had fascinated Bleak from that first day in Nineveh—but they awed him now—playing together along the soft wet ways as if he were forgotten. So it was they did their journeys together from race to race, he thought. As for himself, he was well mated with the buckskin burden bearer. . . . Bleak wished he could take the world's trails with the woman, in a spirit like this of utter forgetfulness—pulling together as now in their playtimes, apart in the soft river bottoms, in the coolness and the sweetness of coming night.

Queerly enough, just now he remembered the first night in Arecibo, the evil distended hands poised above the hips. Larry's face was turned from him. It was a certain crouch of the shoulders that had brought back the picture—the round, loose shoulders, the catlike softness and resiliency. . . . And now Bleak forgot the whole matter of the man and mare, and their exquisite intimacy—forgot even the sinister accompaniment of his mind, too deep for him to catch the notes. . . . Away on his own failure was Bleak, even to the recent truckling. He had left it to the woman—the decision about the eight hundred—a lazy half-man's way. There was an instant throb of stimulus now, urging him to decide for himself, urging him to have no dealing with this money—to face the world with the earned reward if he got it. . . . This was his last chance, but Bleak's stamina oozed back. He did not cinch the decision. . . .

"Hey, Mister Sheriff!" Larry called.

Bleak led up. Larry was standing by the flanks of the mare at the entrance of a narrow break in the thicket. They were nearly out of the hollow between the hills.

"Come on, Larry," Bleak said briskly. "We've got to tear off a few miles now. This ain't a ramble no more, son."

"Yes—we ride fast—but you know gold?"

"Wall, I've looked for it enough—and seen others get it enough—"

"This is where—I think long ago—where the gold hid."

He pointed at the stony washout almost dry now, but where water would

be deep in the rains—his left forefinger denoting a particular spot near the mare's feet. Bleak bent forward, quickened by the thought of the infallibility of Larry's luck, as it linked with the idea of a gold discovery. . . . The signs failed, as he bent closer. He darted a glance upward just as the brown thumb of the boy stabbed the mare in the stifle joint.

Bleak heard the squeal, as the mare stretched out. The thud was the rending of his own flesh. . . . It was black. He was down upon the stones where the signs of gold had failed—his body shaking the world. . . . There was no light. All that he had ever seen die rushed in the black before his eyes—ox, deer, fowls, wildcat, a woman—all in the shaking.

And Larry was upon him, plucking away the guns and knives, as one would draw red brands from a blaze; and laughing was Larry, his loose hands darting around Bleak's eyes and into his throat. . . . He did not mean for his victim to be blind yet. He slapped and gouged the cheeks. Gray came in the pain—a certain light and immortal astonishment. Bleak had already accepted death; this distraction merely held his passing gaze—a snarling, hissing mouth, narrow-slitted eyelids, red fire beneath—patches of dead white on the nostrils. . . .

But why all these grimaces, this pantomime, this mask of fury? It did not seem possible that all this was performed for the poor vagaries of light left in Bleak's eyes. There was something of hell's utmost obscenity about the figure, but it did not greatly matter. Bleak was choking in his own blood; he would soon go into the easier blackness again—in spite of these antics. He smelled a stale den; the laughter was throaty, tongueless.

His lungs were rending for air which the blood shut out. He was utterly played from it all, and his eyelids dropped—but the fingers were at them again, tearing them open by the hairs—forcing him to look longer, to look at the knife.

But the knife did not hold Bleak's

attention as the face did. It was not Larry's but a fiend's face. The lust of the knife lover had debauched it. . . . It laughed; it cocked itself sideways. It bent again, and the knife burned the loose skin of Bleak's throat. The face was cocked up again to listen, just as Bleak was quietly drawing away with the sense of failure and the woman's passing. His eyelids were yanked open once more . . . and now a shot from the thicket altered everything.

The face straightened—sobered in boyish wonderment. The fiend was erased, as a puff of smoke. Here was Larry again. The knife dropped. Larry leaned forward gently—very limp and weary.

XIII

LA HELADA had watched Bleak until his figure was lost on the road to Arecibo. . . . The thrilling illusion of him had not altered, save to become more keen and calling. Daughter of the desert edges, so penetrating in judgment of her own people, wise to look beyond the flaming core of passion, so deep to strip to sounding nonentity the gib young men with their gaudy apparel and soft hands; incisive to open the vanities of her father, disintegrating in a pulp mass that needed more and more wine and more and more sleep—yet now she had her own dear blindness.

The hand of the priest had been a wand of dreams. The stranger had come. He had been vast and simple, and slow to speak. He had not sought to drink nor eat of her bounty—promising to pay and to pray afterward. In making much of themselves with words, the men of her own people had revealed the intrinsic falsehood of their lives. This stranger had made little of himself, had seemed to wonder that she was drawn to him. . . . La Helada had dreamed much. When one dreams and is true, and when one has the courage to wait long, holding fast to the dreams—one grows to see clearly. Thus La Helada saw clearly and was above her people, far from them as the cleansing frost itself—yet she saw in Bleak Totten her own good man.

Her dreams—out of which her vision had come, as the old priest's had come through service and purity—her dreams gathered in a glow about the stranger. He was not as he was to others, in her eyes; all his frailties took a brighter lining from her own giving of light; all his doubtful silences were hued with reality; stamina was given to his unproved resolutions, and a luring tenderness to his falterings. So she saw the stranger as she wanted him to be; and the stranger felt her lifting inspiration—to be that, and more.

Bleak had expected to be back in Arcola on the evening of the day following. There were only desultory connections between the two towns, no wires. Letters were to be relied upon only once in ten days; though villagers passing to and fro occasionally carried mails and messages. When Bleak did not appear, and as the sun went down on the trail, La Helada returned to the edges of the village, where she had found the stranger and where he had found her heart; and there she walked, silently praying.

Since the old priest died, La Helada had not entered the church. It was part of the hardness she had put on. No one knew how the denial had tortured her, nor with what unutterable longing she remembered the face of Mary there in sunlight and candle light. Isobel did not feel that she belonged to the women who came there. (Always a woman was kneeling at the feet of Mary.) La Helada had not given herself away; and it was the women who had given themselves away in passion that came to pray and mourn afterward. Isobel had not seen yet that this of hers was evil pride, scorn for those less strong; that one might better remain weak—than to grow strong with scorn.

So she prayed at the edge of the desert where she had found her own; and at length she remembered that her father would sleep, and that Marie was left alone. She hurried back to the *fonda*. The old man slept. Little sister had answered the call of the night. La Helada cursed her father for his drink and his drowsiness. Suddenly she saw

THE SMART SET

Marie of the future, body drawn, bent and spent with babes plucked from the fire—little Marie, so sweet tonight, a slave woman among the herds and hearths, eyes vague with rebellion, hands like charred wood knots, her heart astray—little Marie like the others stealing in to pray, and all for the savage blindness that comes to women in their beauty and efflorescence, when nights like this will not be denied.

For there were no men in Arcola, just drones; there was no love in Arcola—just lust.

. . . Marie came in very quietly—for the night was far gone. She feared the sleepless one more than ever now, because the stranger had not come with the dusk. . . . An arm was thrust around her in the hallway—and she was led to her room. La Helada held the light to her face.

The younger sister would have replied in kind to fierceness and austerity, but was broken by tears and this strange tenderness. Isobel had seen more than ever clearly in the hours of waiting; her own suffering had made her afraid of herself and pitiful for others.

"If you could only have waited," she moaned, "you might have gone with us—but you would not wait—"

"Gone with you?" Marie repeated in wonder. "You did not believe in him. You would not trust me near him. You would not have me look at this foreigner of yours."

It was true, every word and thought. La Helada could not answer.

"You will keep on waiting. You are old now from waiting—"

"He will come," Isobel whispered huskily.

"If he should, if he should take you back to his people—they told me in the village—his people would make him ashamed of you. They do not believe we are white people—those Americans—"

"This man is not like that. He is different—"

"And our faces grow darker—waiting all the time—you know that."

"Darker slaving in the sun. There is none in Arcola who knows the meaning of manhood—"

"They are our people—"

"They are not my people," said La Helada. "I was wrong to be afraid of you with him. I shall not be afraid again. It was wrong to him and to you—and wicked of me. Everything is wrong that I have thought and lived—if I must be afraid. But I am not! I am not! . . . He has been hurt. The thief with the horse was not there—"

Marie was silent, and then she said, "It is not too late," and she felt her sister's arms.

Their voices roused the *fondista*. He grumbled for them to be silent. God knew, there was enough time in the days for talking.

"They are not our people," La Helada went on, in a lowered tone, "because the women cannot wait. Women who cannot wait do not have sons of strength—"

"The old priest—the old priest—you are like him. He was very strange—"

"He was pure," said La Helada.

"And your stranger is pure?" the younger sister said.

"Yes."

Marie laughed softly. "I saw you watching until it was night—and he did not come. I was sorry for you—"

"He will come," said La Helada.

A sudden loneliness and terror came over Marie when she thought of Isobel making no further effort to restrain her. Mother and father and sister—Isobel had been. And now, with her warm body before her in the darkness, Isobel seemed to have departed in her sorrow, as in death. . . . Yes, it was like death in the house—the pallid silence of La Helada, for she had learned to wait, and there was something immortal in this agony.

Marie knelt before her. "But he will come," she said. "I know he will come—tomorrow. . . . And—oh, it is not too late—I will stay and watch with you—"

The older one pressed her strangely, but did not answer.

"He will come tomorrow," Marie whispered.

"Tomorrow—at noon I will go out to meet him," La Helada said.

It was mid-afternoon. The woman knew the American would have reached this place long since, had he started in the morning. On she hastened; the hideous hours and miles drew on. . . . She would have to go back alone, and in the dark. Nearly halfway she had come. The jungle that marked the distance closed about her, and its lengthening shadows. . . . She would not go back now—but on to Arecibo. If her lover were dead; or if he were not pure—she would never go back to Arcola. . . . She would *not* go on to Arecibo, but stay in the dusk of the thick leaves—and think—and think—until she died. It would not be long. Something was about to break in her breast. . . . And so it was that she hastened deeper into the hollow, until she heard a voice out of the old horrors, before life's waiting had begun.

"This is where—I think long ago—where the gold hid."

. . . She could not see them yet, but ran forward. Something did break in her breast, but she did not die. . . . There was silence, and then the hissing and laughter that she had heard a moment before, and years before. The brown mare was loose. Farther, upon the ground—the men. . . . The devil she knew so well was on top, laughing and playing and holding the knife high for the other to see. . . . La Helada, running forward silently to the kill—perceived her lover's pistol upon the ground. As of old the other loved best the knife. . . . She had always believed she would kill him, in life's good time.

XIV

LA HELADA looked upon the wound she had made, and saw that it was good. Drawing the unquickened thing apart, she darted to the other. Bleak raised his hands at the wrists. She lifted his head in her arms. Blood came forth from his throat. . . . The woman bared his breast. Neither bullet nor knife thrust, she found, but the imprint of the iron shoe. It had gouged a little from right to left, yet the force had been almost

enough. She could not see if the bones were broken. The skin of his face, around the eyes especially, was harrowed and bleeding. She knew well the blunt-knobbed fingers that had played there. Bleak was still inert in her arms, but his low-lidded eyes followed her—with a humility and adoration that gave strength to her and passion to her prayer for his life. . . .

The dusk thickened rapidly. She heard nestlings in the leaves. . . . The brown mare, invisible in the thicket, now lifted her clear whinny. From afar a horse answered. It was not the buckskin saddle pony. He was outlined nearest of all against the darkening green. He suddenly raised his own trumpet. The two were trembling.

La Helada, kneeling beside her lover, realized that she was not alone—that eyes of strangers held her through the dusk—saw her now with her own and the body of the other she had known. A voice was whispering in the direction of the brown mare. It was just a whisper, yet she knew someone was trying to attract the brown mare—coming forward as if with a handful of grain to catch a free horse. . . .

And now the woman saw the leather bag that contained the paper and pesos. She stretched out her hand to it—tossed it softly under cover of the deeper growths. . . . There was a laugh and the brown mare was led away.

This theft roused her. Her lover had come so far. Now the voices brought deeper and more fearful intelligence. The one who had come nearest was telling the others what he had seen. The voices were of the men of her own people—old companions of him with whom she had reckoned. They had come to deliver him from the American. No one knew so well as she, La Helada—how evil as hell they were. . . . Would the brown mare be enough? . . . She heard it plainly now, and with a scornful laugh—“*La Helada de Arcola.*”

They were worse than wolves to her—their numbers more dreadful than the group ferocity of a wolf pack. . . . They had come to deliver an old friend from the sheriff—and had found him deliv-

ered. . . . She heard them laughing now at the death, and at herself—the wonder of the sheriff down, the other dead and the woman being there.

She must not seem to know them; she must not lift her head as if to identify them; she must not seem afraid. . . .

"Yes, it is La Helada," she answered, not turning her eyes from the face of her lover. "If you know La Helada—you will know that she has kept her word—"

The story had traveled much farther than Arecibo. She could not endure the tension in silence.

"Why do you not take your friend away—if you want him? You have the mare that he stole; let him ride once more—" She laughed.

"We did not come for him dead," one answered, with repression.

"Ah—then you are the wardens come to take La Helada for keeping her promise—"

They laughed at her now. "The Frost waited until the harvest was rich before she nipped," a voice called.

"You are welcome to the harvest. . . . Watch, I'll toss it toward you!"

She sped to the covert where the bulging leather bag had fallen—raised it in her arm and hurled it toward the voices. . . . "Mine was the red harvest and that was enough. And now I am tired of you and sick of talk—and it is wise for me to be alone—"

She heard the scramble to the place the bag had fallen; heard them draw away, heard the touch and flare of matches from the box. . . . Suffocating in the terror, she lifted her lover again to her breast. . . . She had no more to throw to the wolves. . . . Would they come now? Would they come now? . . . It was like a stroke to her—the sudden trumpeting of the forgotten saddle pony. . . . They were leading the brown mare away. The buckskin, taught to stand with trailing bridle rein, would soon break his law of life to follow.

La Helada crawled to him and caught the rein. He signaled again. The mare's answer was farther. . . . Yet the Mexicans might return. The woman's every breath was a prayer. The saddle pony's

head whipped at the rein, which dropped to the hollow of her arm.

"Oh, loved American, you must help me now! . . . You must help me lift you to the saddle. . . . They are devils. If they think of coming back—there will be an end of you and me together."

Bleak muttered thickly, but it was she who lifted his entire weight, until he stood, his knees giving, body rocking, his brain lost in tumults of agony. . . . She prayed for strength; kissed him to awaken his strength. In hideous blackness of the very pits of pain, Bleak tried to hold the thought that he must help, but it was La Helada who lifted him to the saddle. The inspiration of fear, and the passion to save, made her terrible in strength. When his feet fumbled and lost the stirrups, she held him all the tighter. . . . Always the answering whinny of the brown mare was farther and farther away—until they were out of the hollows between the hill ranges. Now if the mare answered her old serving companion—the sound did not reach.

You could have seen them under the stars—the man hunched forward, tied to the pommel, held from the wear and grind of the pommel against his body by a bundle of springy branches the woman had gathered and thrust between. Often he mouthed a word for mercy—to be let down from his cross. But La Helada knew that he would travel better tonight, in the warmth and fresh ravage of his hurt, than tomorrow in the excruciating stiffness of healing's first intention—if tomorrow meant healing. . . . The woman prayed for that.

She wanted nothing but that. The brown mare—a devil to be rid of; the money bag—bait of wolves. She wanted nothing but his life. She could go to the church to pray for that—to the altar where the old women came, the whipped and lost-hearted women. She could kneel with them now. She had not been good in holding herself apart from them. She had seen the evil and weakness of others, and had been estranged from their good—estranged, too, from the mercies of the Mother of us

all. . . . And she caught the cold hand of her lover, and cried out to the stars for his life. . . . Through the years she had conceived her heaven, and he had come. "Though I have been hard and aloof—do not let him pass from me now, O Mother of infinite mercy!"

Thus La Helada prayed through the hours, holding fast to the stranger, holding fast to the buckskin pony, that halted often and trumpeted to the wide night. . . . At last, the shadows of the huts of Arcola—the density of the trees against the gray faint diffusion of starlight, the broad sprawling *fonda*—the empty stable with its open door. . . . She unbound her lover, and let him sink through her arms to the straw. Long had he ceased to suffer in the numbness of too much pain, which brings at last its own anesthesia. . . . He sighed and breathed. She kissed him—kissed him again.

Then she unsaddled and bridled the pony—brought grain and fresh water. She did not fasten him in any way. Had he not earned the freedom to search for his mistress, after he was fed? . . . She was leaving now for help to carry her lover to the house, but a thought came—from her soul it seemed to come. . . . It meant she must leave him for a moment—and run for prayer to the little church where she had not knelt in all the years. The action seemed related in her soul to the life of her lover. . . . It was tearing to leave him, but he breathed and was at rest. . . . Running, she crossed the deep sand of the village road. The door was always open, and a candle burning. . . . Mary was there in her old supernal mercifulness—looking down upon the candle glow; and at her feet a woman was kneeling. . . . La Helada marveled. Even in the heart of the night, a woman had come. She hurried forward and knelt beside the creature. It was little Marie, who turned to her, crying:

"It is a miracle! My prayer is answered. . . . I was praying for you—and for him—"

"He is come," murmured La Helada, sinking to rest an instant upon her sister's knees.

XV

THE woman came to the hammock and lifted her patient, already toasted on one side from the sun of midday. Bleak let himself gradually to the stones of the porch, while the hammock was swung end to end where the sun would hunt it out an hour later. The hours passed very rapidly—very swift reading, they were, but these punctuations were laborious. Bleak meanwhile stood stranded where he had come to foot, for the wide white clothes of the *fondista* were close-reefed. He looked as if he had been wading and the tide had suddenly flowed out. . . . Now La Helada came to the rescue, restoring him to the folds of the swaying couch, and Bleak sighed.

When the woman was within about her work, Bleak would count the blossoms of the vine, until he fell asleep. It was handier than counting sheep. Besides, the yellow heat did filmy dances of a most drowsy nature through the interstices. One's eyelids dropped from the very ache of the light. It was all right. They had all told him to rest; to avoid every appearance of exertion. The old women, who had learned all the ills of flesh by having them—and the old Spanish doctor, by a life of association—had agreed for once that Bleak must lie very still, until his heart healed. Besides, La Helada had said it. And Bleak was a true patient. The days had worn out his pain; all that was black and clogged in his breast was running free and red again. At first, he was not permitted even to think about work; but now a little each day in the presence of the woman, brief essays into the future were indulged. The particular trouble that raised Bleak's temperature in these increasing intervals could not be restrained much longer.

He felt that he must go ahead to Sodom to prepare a place for her. It wasn't the impossibility of using his own shack—that would do for the present with a lot of brown soap and river water—but Bleak couldn't take the woman into the Sodom that he had left. Sodom must be born again, even as he

had been. The claim was there. Bleak could hold the thought of working on the claim almost as long as he could fight sleep with the dancing sunrays in his eyes—but Sodom must be made familiar with this new zeal. In short, he had the particular man passion to be respected in the presence of the woman—even if he had to fight for this respect individually with every man on the wet placer. . . . From the present eminence Bleak could see that he had not been exactly respected. In the usual course, the old point of view would resume itself unerringly in men's minds—this was the crux. La Helada could have his failure in Arecibo, but she must not look upon that old picture of Bleak Totten as butt of the community.

Far better never to return to Sodom, Bleak thought—but the claim was there, and the debts were there. It wrung him to get back broke. . . . He deserved to. He had broken from decent honesty. He had been greedy for the winning. It had all come out like number work, the answer proved. He had gotten no more than was coming—but it wrung him to go back broke. Yet the very essence of the big game he had lost and its meaning to a man—was to go back, face it out, work it out.

Bleak saw that he had needed to get off into the desert alone. It had been the very life of him; he had never seen himself before. But that other fool Bleak must not be restored by the men of Sodom for the eyes of the woman.

He watched her now at her sewing—and he thought of the bullet and the diabolical Larry; of her lifting him into the saddle, lifting the boulder of a man that now strained the hammock. She had lifted him before and since in other ways. . . . So cool and strange she was—and how wonderfully her red lips went out to catch the thread for her teeth to cut. Her downcast eyes he watched with fervor religious. . . . If she ever really turned away (as he had thought in those two days of hell in Arecibo), Bleak saw that he would be smashed to pulp. It was his own dirty doings, and her suffering because he did not come, that let down his spirits to des-

peration before the race. It was all very clear to him. . . . "Cool, sweet little thing—brave and good little thing!" he thought. . . . The big fellow trembled with love for her. What a rock she was in a weary land!

"But you cannot go alone," she said, biting the thread again. "I would find you fallen on the way and near to death. Oh, no—oh, no! . . . No, I will not stay in the town nearest Sodom—until you make the house ready. I will go with you and help to make it ready. . . . Do not talk about *that* any more. . . . Besides, a stranger is coming."

Bleak was too troubled to care about the stranger. He would fall like Samson upon the Sodomites if . . . The *fondista's* running forth and the voice that answered caused Bleak to turn his head a little; and presently he beheld Killjoy, né Renney.

The old horseman was lean from his long journeying and ashen from forebodings. He had known something would happen, even when the telegram came announcing the capture. He had learned the truth in Arecibo, and was not slow to accept Bleak's testimony (which was partly the woman's) that it was the younger male set of Arecibo which had undertaken to rescue Larry and the brown mare on the road to Arcola. . . . Her kicking accomplishment was discussed.

"That young sarpint l'arned her that," said Killjoy. "He was partial to that brown mare as a babby. I recall me as how she had a splint—how he brought her to me all rockin' lame one day; an' says he loved her like a sister, an' how he'd like to hev her fur his own an' work out the price of her. I told him if he work till kingdom come he wouldn't earn more'n a leg or two o' what she was worth to me. Bless you, I knew that filly when she war milkin' her mammy fur a livin'. But Larry seed her right. He banged that splint onto her, I concluded later."

Bleak was very thoughtful. The manger in the hillside, the candle light and the boy's tale that first night in Arecibo came back and broke itself into

pieces against this. He, Bleak Totten, had certainly been mentally accessible.

"She ain't just natchurl, thet mare," Killjoy brooded. "I'd lay me down an' let her walk on me to get her back—"

Bleak shivered, and the woman looked up from her sewing.

"But thar ain't no such luck as me ever seein' her ag'in," the old man added.

"Well, we got the hosstheif—" Bleak consoled.

The jaw of Killjoy seemed to slip its hinge, and his tongue to search for something lost.

"But you sure recall, Sheriff, it was the hose an' not the man—thet reward was offered on—"

"Lord love you, Killjoy—I didn't say nothin' with intents to hold you up nohow!"

The old man breathed. "I reckon you'll go on searchin'?" he ventured finally.

La Helada glanced at him mildly. She didn't understand English, but sensed a turn in the talk. A deep chuckle came from the hammock.

"In course I'd delegate to give you expenses—"

"Killjoy," said Bleak, "did you ever hear the story o' Roger's di'mond?"

The other hadn't, and was hopeless in prospect.

"It was told to me at a time of sore distractions an' long ago," said Bleak, "but I recollect this Roger was one of them Ethiopian princes, and he had a di'mond that flashed hellfire. One night a slave stole it, cuttin' Roger's throat. Slave was found next day acutely dismembered, said di'mond bein' traced to a camel driver, whose stuffin' was kicked out *prompto* by the faithfulest camel in his fold; hereupon the narrative gets down to business and pushes on—perishin' in excitement. . . . Now I landed on that brown mare o' yours in quiet times, an' what she did to me in that brief spell—I'm still thinkin' on. I wasn't quite the same—even after seein' her first in Nineveh. . . . No, I ain't goin' to take up the trail o' Killjoy's di'mond—"

Thereupon Bleak translated the story

with emendations for La Helada, who delighted in the playful and pellucid depths of her lover's wisdom.

XVI

As they neared the American border, and the honeymoon was in full, La Helada became more shy and exquisite than ever. All the enticements of girlhood returned—as they never could have come to her in Arcola. They had crossed the desert together—as true mates should do in the beginning; found their hills and rivers and springs and towns. . . . Bleak could not understand that this was the same trail he had traveled alone, cursing and bewildered and alone. It was so different now—as if Mexico was sunk Lethe-ward, leaving all its silence and beauty and heaven for two happy ones who had remained alive.

That's the way a man comes to the house of a woman—cursing and bewildered and unfound.

Morning and night he was amazed at the burden she carried—and the ease of it—all the little things of love, the laughs, the whispers, the shining adventures, queer celestial intimations, as if children were awaking to laughter in her heart. All that he knew of the world of men and the sky of angels were but beginnings of her wisdom. When he faltered, she finished. . . .

For days (in the hammock toward the end) he had dreaded the journey for her. The fatigue, the thirst, the terrible heat, the little towns that greet a stranger in silence. What a ghastly illusion of an unfound man was that! She was swift as an antelope, light as a winged creature. Fatigue—she had abundant strength remaining for the evenings—to serve him and make the people love her. There wasn't a church on the journey that she didn't find for prayer; as for the heat and the thirst—it was like a journey through a garden. Indeed, she had come into her own garden—planted and tended by years of waiting and dreaming. Love was the living light of it. The first dawn had melted the frost.

Bleak only lived what she believed him to be. All thoughts came to the bar of what she would have him be. Such was her marvelous handiwork in his making-over. . . . He believed in his heart that he had been desperate and evil and abandoned. With his every word and action he sought to withhold the woman from that. She made it very easy as do those genii of the feminine whose love is fresh-hued and replenished each day. His Spanish prospered and was capable of emotion.

Only Sodom must not restore the old Bleak Totten for her eyes—this was the solitary shadow that followed the man.

Maldonado at last—the little town that hung like a balcony from the last hill, overlooking the bordering Cabezo, and then Sodom. . . . Bleak was thinking how long it would take to pay the debts and raise the money to send for Marie. Little sister would not go out in the honeymoon, but declared she would abide with her father until the message and the money arrived. Thought of her was very dear to the heart of Isobel, who planned to journey around by Arecibo, Santo Tomas and the railroads, Mexican and American. . . . This night, however, Bleak was thinking mostly of the debts, the eke and the labor—and of what Sodom would say on the arrival tomorrow, and of how much of this the elder sister would understand. The shadow was closer than ever before—as Sodom was closer. . . .

Never was the woman more radiant. She saw long journeys in the future. America—the States—was before her, strange calling visions of the years; and in the aura of her lover she divined all powers to master this tremendous and terrifying civilization. She granted the penniless gold digger of tomorrow, but tonight he was potential with the future of a king. She saw them journeying together to all the cities and cathedrals of the world; and she saw Marie arriving swiftly and established safely in some real man's heart. . . . Love and the border stimulated her like a fiery wine. The more that Bleak tried to cool and obscure her dreams, the more radiant their origin.

"But Sodom is less than Arecibo," he said.

"It is the beginning—and we shall be together."

"But the shack is a kennel. We are worse than poor—in debt!"

"We shall work together—and your house shall be mine. I shall love it—"

"The fellers"—Bleak hesitated, unwilling to do a general injustice—"well, they're only my sort o' ruffians."

La Helada laughed. "They will be glad to see you again," she said.

"Won't you stay here tomorrow an' let me sneak across alone—an' get things squared away for you—please? I'll come back for you tomorrow night—please—"

"Please not," she said, softly joyous. "I want to get there and begin—I shall love it all—"

He turned to her hopelessly, but the gleam of her eyes in the starlight caught and held him for a moment to the exclusion of all else. He heard her strong, true heart—beating so rapidly and for him. A look came to his face, now that the last hope was gone—a look, as he glanced across the border, that was a warning for Sodom to "pass *pronto* and tread delicate" across his emotional preserves. He turned to the woman again. . . . They stood on the slope of the mesa and it was morning.

"She smokes!" said Bleak, regarding the settlement with awe.

"Did she not smoke before?" the woman asked.

"Not like that!" he said with excitement. "They've sure struck action in the last ten weeks—"

Bleak felt lonely and an outlander. Something had boomed in Sodom. He had not been there—he, Sheriff, had taken no part. As of old, he was returning luckless and empty-handed, and with a woman—no horse, no money, no thief—and with a woman. . . . He looked at her now sorrowfully. This to which he was bringing her was little better than the herds and hearths that she hated so terribly. And she would not stay back; she would not understand; she was so blithe and pretty. . . .

A male human figure had detached

itself from the settlement and approached them. It was a thick, squat figure which Bleak knew for Fortitude Lerch long before the features cleared. Here was hell's own debt master, the man who knew the value of a dollar, as a mother alone with her first man child. Bleak felt him cold and metallic. . . . Thus he prepared the woman:

"This here Lerch person ain't no particular friend o' mine."

And Fortitude at this moment appeared to grasp the identity of his old townsman; the result was extraordinary. Bleak did not remember ever having seen the other without his hat. There had been a Sodom suspicion to the effect that Fortitude was hairless—but it never had been proved even by night alarms. It shone now to the delighted sun. Fortitude was smiling, fumbling with the broken fixture—and smiling as if his parents were restored from beyond the grave.

"It's all off, Fortie," Bleak said vaguely. "We got that greaser kid—but an outfit of his pals threw us down in a jungle an' took the mare away. . . . So I ain't ready to pay—"

Bleak was set and rigid for the change. The shock was cruel accordingly, since the hat was not restored, nor did a tittle of the smile's effusiveness diminish.

Now Fortitude was at speech: he had been a hard man, he said; he had perceived the error of his ways. Change had come to his heart, the same which he was prepared to prove by taking over Bleak's debts, and paying him the sum of fifteen hundred dollars, the trifling consideration being the unworked claim which Bleak in his official capacity had not time nor desire to make the most of. . . . Fortitude accentuated all this by drawing forth from the small of his back a black leather case, the removal of which left his belt dangling.

Out of the shock and the chaos, one deadly fear manifested itself in Bleak's mind: Fortitude, now counting, would surely die before the transfer could be made. A paper had to be written. . . . The face of the woman came between Bleak's tortured eyes and the pressed unfolded currency.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

It would have been far easier to hurl his hat into the air than to summon Spanish for these negotiations. La Helada asked again. Bleak got through it.

"You will not sell," she said quietly. "He is not a particular friend of yours."

In vain Bleak pleaded the change of heart in the Lerch person.

La Helada pointed to the settlement. "It did not smoke like that before," she said.

Bleak began to feel the heat of their unsheltered position.

Now baleful, now whining, Fortitude followed them to the canyon, where a row of new shacks had been built, with reinforcements of tent cloth. . . . Strangers moved to and fro among the old faces; greetings were roared at Bleak, and hard hands grasped his, but no one had time to listen about the horsethief. . . . "Are you thinkin' o' sellin' the claim, Bleak?" . . . "Say, Sheriff, is that old claim o' yours on the market this mornin'?" There was ample time for this. . . . A dude from the East offered him eight thousand before he reached his old shack to ensconce the woman. . . .

He wanted to be alone with her there . . . to tell her again and again how great and essential she was; but towns-men followed to the door.

That door had never worked. Late winds had blown the dust and gravel against it; rain had lodged it wide open. . . . He left her with a look of longing, and a promise to run back.

At Nig Fantod's he found that the violent little man, Bertie Cotton, had uncovered a new lode just three weeks before; that his wash had suddenly turned rich. The lode drove straight into Bleak's claim and through—because Fortitude had burrowed night and day until he found it on the north. Bleak's was the heart of eldorado. Already the East had heard it calling, and claims were being staked clear on to Nineveh. . . . Bleak could bear no more. He had not been gone from the shack twenty minutes—but the way back was long.

La Helada was weeping.

THE SMART SET

"What is it—hey, little woman, what's troublin'?" he called, running.

"*Mi dote—mi dote!*"

She was softly beating her knees with a package of Mexican paper money. . . . It was her dower, she moaned. For years she had been saving. She had intended to surprise him. Four hundred

dollars in Mexican—enough to pay many of his debts. . . . "And now," she cried, "you are so rich—it means nothing to you—nothing—"

Bleak removed his hat, and bent to kiss her shoulder. Suddenly he went to the door, and with serious energy set about kicking away the gravel.



THE SHADOW

By Witter Bynner

A YOUNG MAN

FAINTLY I find your face. But I could swear
A woman hurried by us, while we smiled,
With groping hand as though to part the air,
With open breast as though to feed a child.

A YOUNG WOMAN

My eyes were closed, beloved. But your hand
Gave me the touch of her, your eyes the sight,
Till I can see her crouching in the sand—
And I shall find her hiding in the night.

THE YOUNG MAN

Why do you urge me with a touch so wild?

THE YOUNG WOMAN

A child! I hear the crying of a child!

THE SHADOW

Let me alone, I tell you! Such as I,
We want for such as you to let us be . . .
You did not see me when you two went by.
Look to a child of yours! Leave mine to me!

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, tell me why she ran away so fast
Into the night again—and how she knew,
For it was very dark here when she passed,
That soon, oh, soon, I bear a child to you?

THE YOUNG MAN

Why do you pierce me with a cry so wild?

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Because that should have been our child—our child!

ONLY A DOLLAR

By Helen Davies

EMMELINE was so tired that every muscle and fibre of her strong young body ached. She had been on foot since early dawn, when she had risen to iron her best shirtwaist and duck skirt, because tomorrow was Decoration Day, and Jim Sullivan had more than hinted at his intention of taking her on the annual excursion of the Elks. Then Emmeline blushed, because she felt confident that coming back in the darkness and softness of the early spring evening, hidden in a quiet corner on the steamer deck, the decisive word would be spoken, for which she hungered. She pushed a little straying curl back from her moist forehead, glancing wearily at the clock confronting her, but it was still too early in the afternoon to think of closing time.

But it was undeniably hot, for the sun, sloping toward the west, streamed into the shop, and the odors from the big trays of fresh chocolates seemed almost overpowering, as the throngs of purchasers passed and repassed, until the girl, in the narrow space behind the counter, felt actually giddy, and more than once mistook the narrow pink for the wide yellow ribbon and was forced to rectify her error with damp, trembling hands at a sharp reproof from her superior.

She sighed impatiently, for the entire community seemed bent on satiating their craving for sweets for the approaching holiday.

"Yes, ma'am, fifty cents a pound," she repeated mechanically for the hundredth time that day, in response to a query from an elaborately gowned young girl whose fresh, daintily gloved hand was extended toward a tray.

Then the eyes of the server and the

served met frankly and curiously, the shop girl enviously wondering what life meant to one who evidently knew no other care than that of gratifying artificial needs; the other speculative as to why the newspapers pitied those who did nothing all day long but weigh out bonbons, with the privilege, which she had seen stated on authority, of eating all they might desire.

Then the clock struck, and with the departure of the final customers the restraint was loosened and a babel of conversation ran behind the counter, as coverings were hastily thrown over the trays of candies, the pasteboard boxes neatly piled, the bolts of ribbon rolled and flung into the drawers.

"Gee," exclaimed a fresh voice, "who's goin' to the Elks' picnic?" Adding mischievously: "I bet I can guess who's takin' of Em. You needn't get so red. There ain't one of us girls ain't glad you cut out Annie Saunders with Jim Sullivan. Don't it jar you to see her yellow face under the big plumed hat she took her bottom dollar to buy? Much good will it do her now. She was sure she'd get an invite."

Again Emmeline blushed, a deep, rosy, lovely flush. She forgot her aching feet, her overpowering weariness, and the knowledge that many hours of preparation for tomorrow's festivities lay between her and her night's rest. She quickened her movements, for soon she would be called to the desk to receive her pay envelope, containing her precious eight dollars for the week's work. She knew exactly how she intended to spend every cent. Four dollars must go to pay her board at home, and she knew her father would be waiting for it before

THE SMART SET

sauntering around to the saloon on the corner where most of hers and her mother's hard earned money disappeared as swiftly as the froth upon the beer. Emmeline sighed, then realized that she knew a man who she felt confident was of an absolutely different type, and when she had her own little home— She wrenched her thoughts back to their accustomed groove.

Two dollars and a half must be spent for a pair of new shoes. Hers were absolutely too shabby for such a grand occasion as tomorrow's festivities. She glanced down at them scornfully. They were cracked and run down at the heels and yes, certainly, there was an undeniable slit, conspicuously across the toe. The shoes now were not an extravagance but an absolute necessity, and she had set her heart on high heels, shining buckles, a close imitation of those worn by the girls to whom day after day she sold bonbons and chocolates. Again she lost herself in calculation. She must keep a quarter for the insurance, fifty cents for the stockings which looked just like silk and seventy-five cents for her carfares and lunches for the ensuing week. Again she calculated, if she only dared to keep back a dollar from her contribution to the household expenses, she could impart a final touch of elegance to her costume by purchasing a pair of long white silk gloves. She had seen them, marked down, at Abraham's, which she daily passed, and where she often loitered to stare at the bargains temptingly displayed, and plainly marked, enticingly as "Nobby—\$1.48," or "Elite—\$2.59."

Then her name was called, and she went alertly forward to the pay desk, extending an impatient hand, for already it was later than she had thought, and there was so much to be accomplished.

"Emmeline O'Grady," exclaimed the shrill voice of the cashier, a spare thin woman peering over her spectacles, "there's your envelope, but you're docked one dollar, as one of your slips and the cash turned in this afternoon didn't correspond. You know the rules of the house. The young ladies are responsible for their mistakes."

Emmeline's head reeled, she turned pale, and grasped the edge of the desk, as she faltered: "Oh, I couldn't have made a mistake. I was so careful for all the rush. I must have my money this week. I can't lose it." Her voice broke a little, and big tears stood in her eyes.

The cashier grew impatient. She was only human, and longed for rest and silence and the solace of a cup of tea; then, too, she was not accustomed to have her decisions questioned.

"I never make mistakes," she delivered icily. "There is no doubt about the error. The slip reads: 'Four pounds of chocolate at fifty cents a pound.' And you handed in one dollar instead of two. There is no need for further argument. Perhaps this may teach you to be more careful in future. Take your envelope—you are keeping the others waiting."

Mechanically, Emmeline extended an icy hand to clutch her diminished portion. Her head was spinning and her throat parched, as she thought vaguely of what the loss involved, the readjustment of her financial scheme. What could she go without? She must have the shoes, but then her father had a heavy hand.

A murmur of sympathy rose from the nearest girl. "Sure it's a mean shame that one dressed like herself should play such a trick on a poor girl."

Emmeline started. Suddenly she remembered. She had been so absorbed in watching the beautifully dressed girl who had purchased the four pounds of chocolate that she had utterly failed to scrutinize the bill which she had profered in payment. She recalled the smiling face, the merry eyes, the voice, musical in its intonation, the freshly gloved hand indicating the preferred bonbons, the little gold purse dangling from a chain set with diamonds from which the bill had been abstracted.

Emmeline set her teeth, and her face under the soft dimpled flesh grew resolutely hard. It was not fair that she should suffer—should be cheated out of her hard earned dollar—lose the holiday, which involved so much more than

a mere day's pleasure. Tremendous issues were based on the outcome of that outing. She knew Jim Sullivan's impressionable, impulsive nature, and she realized that alone with him, in the isolation of the holiday crowd, she could bring to a focus his wandering indecision between her and her rival in his affection.

She could not, would not lose her chance. At no matter what cost, she would have what she desired—she would brave her father's anger. She had the right to spend her money as she chose. It was undeniably hers. She had earned every cent of it.

She walked deliberately to Abraham's, and entering, determinedly pushed her way to the shoe department, and with the haughty mien of one to whom new footgear was not an unaccustomed luxury, demanded to be shown the very latest mode in pumps. Then the silk stockings were carefully selected with keen scrutiny as to possible dropped threads or thin spots; the coveted gloves were likewise subjected to thorough investigation; another dollar carefully tucked and pinned inside her waist, and then did Emmeline, with parcels in her hand, turn toward her home. But her footsteps lagged, her indignation and determination had begun to ebb, and she found her brave spirit sinking to the level of her tired, hungry body. She dreaded to encounter her father's bitter tongue, and had felt the weight of his heavy hand too often not to recoil from its memory; but she must go back, and she sought to brace her flagging courage by the repeated aphorism that it was better to know the worst and have it over; then she quickened her steps. She must meet Jim Sullivan, according to promise, and decide just where they were to meet next day.

She turned the corner of the street, and, flushed and breathless, ran up the long flights of stairs and burst open the door of the kitchen, where her mother, a faded, bent, prematurely old woman, glanced up from her occupation of paring potatoes, to exclaim apprehensively:

"Sure, you're that late, Em." Adding fretfully: "And your father's fair wild

with waitin' for the money. He's been lookin' down the street forty times, wonderin' what was keepin' you, and now he's gone growlin' and scoldin' to walk round the block, thinkin' he'd meet you. Where have you been—what did you do it for?"

"I came round the other way," replied the girl wearily. "I had to stop at Abraham's to get some things for the excursion."

"Sure, I hope ye never spent all the money," was the terrified response. "And your father sayin' his throat's as dry as a furnace and he's got a thirst on him so that he could drink the sea dry. Sure, you never was that foolish that you spent your wages, knowin' I ain't been able to airm a cent this week back, along with my burnt wrist."

"Give me a cup of tea," replied Emmeline impatiently. "I'm that bent, I dunno what I'm at. I never seed such a home. It ain't nothin' but money, money from mornin' till night. Who airms it, I'd like to know? Ain't it mine? Don't I sweat for it? What do you think it means to be young, cravin' a bit of fun, and havin' someone allers snatchin' at every cent? I wish I was out of it all. I'm a downright fool to live at home!" The quick tears born of mingled fatigue and anger sprang in the girl's eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"There, there," said her mother, soothing and apprehensive. "There, you set down and let me wait on you. I know its nacheral for girls to like pretty things, and I often feel bad to think ye can't have every cent ye airm. But Lor', 'tain't no use talkin'. It just comes nacheral for men to drink and cuss, and wimmen has got to take care on 'em, same as if they were babies. That's what we're here for. But now you drink your tea and eat a bit o' quick before your father comes, and maybe I can put him off with some story about your losin' part of your money, or bein' fined, or somethin'. Maybe ye didn't spend much, anyway."

The girl swallowed her tea, but pushed back the food untasted, saying slowly: "I'm sick o' lyin' to suit father, and

handin' out every cent while we—" She paused, looking contemptuously at the bare, unlovely squalor of the room, at her mother's wrinkled, careworn face and faded calico dress, at her own split shoes and cheap black skirt and soiled shirtwaist.

"I'm sick of it all," she reiterated, springing to her feet and dashing down her parcels on the table, then reiterating doggedly: "I've got a right to my happiness, and I've got to have decent things. Who'd look at me, in these duds, and Jim Sullivan wantin' to take me to the Elks tomorrow!" With a swift motion she stripped the wrappings from her purchases.

"See," she exclaimed triumphantly, "I bought these," and thrusting her fingers into the buckled shoes, she made them execute a dance upon the table, then snatching up the stockings, she dangled them before her mother's horrified gaze, and held the long white silk gloves aloft — then, dropping them, banged down her pay envelope. "There's two dollars left," she announced succinctly and defiantly. "I was fined one, 'cause I made a mistake, and I kep' out my lunch money. I ain't goin' hungry for no one."

There was absolute silence, then her mother broke into a whimper like a frightened animal.

"My Gawd!" she ejaculated with pale lips. "Who's goin' to tell *him*?"

But even as she spoke, a heavy tread shook the frail stairs, the door burst open and a powerfully built man entered the room. His face was flaming red, his eyes excited, his thick black hair erect on his head, his cheeks covered with a three days' growth of stubble; his dirty, hairy hands were clenching and unclenching, as he ejaculated, stuttering with rage: "Where is she? Where is she? I'll teach her to run round the streets and kape her father waitin' on her pleasure!"

His roving eyes lit on the girl. "Ye're there, are ye?" he snarled. "I'll tache ye to trapes the streets with a lot of shameless hussies, no better than yourself, and kape me waitin'! Where's the money? Don't the fool know it's Saturday night?"

He thrust out his hand; then suddenly his eyes fell on the table littered with paper and string and purchases.

For an instant he was speechless. Then the veins swelled dark on his forehead; his eyes were bloodshot, and the thick lips receded from his set teeth. Emitting the snarl of an infuriated beast, he ran toward the girl, seizing and shaking her violently with one hand, while with the other he slapped her face so violently that a red mark sprang out on it, as though burnt by fire.

"Have a care, Jim—have a care!" shouted his wife, roused from passivity. "Ye can't go knockin' a girl about like that."

"Can't I?" he retorted thunderingly. "Who in hell's goin' to stop me? I'll larn her! Where's the money?" Again he raised his big fist threateningly.

With the courage born of desperation, Emmeline sullenly pointed to the envelope, then stealthily sought to cover her little possessions with a bit of paper. But her father perceived her gesture, as with a rapid motion he inserted his thumb and finger into the envelope and drew out the two-dollar bill, which in his astonishment, he let flutter to the floor.

"My Gawd!" vociferated the infuriated man. "To think that a child of mine would dare to play me such a trick and bring 'ome a passel of rubbige like that!"

He spat contemptuously upon the pitiful finery, then with a quick swoop snatched it into a crumpled mass, and striding over to the stove, lifted the lid and flung it full upon the coals.

Emmeline uttered a wild cry, and sprang forward, but too late, as gloves and stockings caught the blaze and vanished in a wreath of smoke, and the little shoes shriveled beyond redemption.

The mother hunched cowering in her chair, visibly shrinking into the smallest possible compass and hiding her eyes with a trembling hand. The man deliberately turned on the girl and struck her again so violently that she staggered and fell crouching against the wall for shelter.

"I'll larn ye to play tricks!" he shouted. "Now mind, out ye go unless

ye make up the money ye owe for board. I ain't carin' how ye airn it," he concluded significantly, "but the money's got to come."

But the mother's instinct of protection was aroused. "Don't ye go for to put idees in her head," she quavered. "Em's a good girl."

But the man turned on her with an angry scowl.

"Good!" he sneered. "Spendin' her wages on finery like that!" indicating the smoldering heap within the stove. "I've had my say," he concluded, stirring the shrinking, trembling girl with his boot. "Stop that snivelin', and get to work." Stooping, he picked up the two-dollar bill and lurched out of the room.

As the door slammed behind him, Emmeline sprang to her feet. She was very pale now, save where the mark of her father's hand flared a vivid scarlet blotch upon her cheek. She staggered slightly, pushed the hair back from her forehead, then faced her mother, sullen, defiant.

"You heerd him, urgin' me, what allers kep' myself respectable, to go out on the street. Well—I'm through now. I'm free. He'll never get another cent out of me, so help me Gawd! I'm goin' to meet Jim Sullivan," she went on recklessly, "and tell him—maybe he'll take me." She choked down a sob. "Just as I am. We could live if we put our money together. He airns good wages."

The older woman rose, and leaned her hands on the table. "It's hard luck havin' ye go," she said, with the simple acquiescence of one accustomed to submission. "And you the last, and the others out in Calvary. God rest their souls!" She blessed herself rapidly, adding slowly: "But ye hadn't ought to make your father mad, when he's fightin' drunk already. Come, put some water on that poor cheek of yours, and comb up your hair. See, it's goin' on eight o'clock—maybe things'll look brighter in the mornin'—" She tried to smile.

Emmeline started. She knew that Jim Sullivan did not like to be kept waiting. He was so accustomed to the feminine adulation which deferred gladly to

his whims, that she knew, by bitter experience, that he was quite capable of sauntering off to the nearest billiard saloon if she were not promptly on time. Hastily rectifying the disorder of her appearance, she flew down the stairs and dashed out into the street, and arrived breathless at the appointed spot, a short street leading down the wharf. It was a favorite evening trysting place when it was deserted by the heavy drays, laden with barrels and boxes and manipulated by cursing drivers lashing their straining, sweating teams. Emmeline hardly dared to look as she abruptly turned the corner, but there stood the object of her adoration, leaning against the post of a street lamp, and gazing first in one direction and then another.

He was short, stockily built, his head covered with yellow waving hair combed low over his forehead; his light blue eyes were shifty and sulky, his firm white teeth gripped a cigarette resolutely. His blue serge suit was padded to make his shoulders broader than nature had planned, and a large false pearl glittered in his red necktie, and his pudgy thick fingers displayed more than one ring.

"So you're 'ere!" he ejaculated without preliminaries, and pushing his hat farther back on his head. "I wonder if you realize I've been kep' waitin' nigh a hour? I ain't used to be kep' waitin'," he affirmed with the mien of a spoilt child.

"I know that—I know that," apologized the girl breathlessly, shrinking back from the circle of light.

"Then what did you do it for?" demanded the man, unpacified by her gentleness. "Ain't that just like a woman to know she's aggravatin' yet to keep on bein' it! There I've been coolin' my heels, and I know the shop closed at six. What in thunder have you been at?"

"I'm late. I'm sorry," whispered Emmeline, with downcast eyes and heaving bosom. "'Cause I stopped at Abraham's to get a few things."

"Oh, that's the game!" replied the man, mollified by her submission. Adding jocosely with a wink: "Maybe you was expectin' an invite to the Elks, and

wanted to do a feller proud." Stretching an amorous finger, he chucked her under the chin.

"Oh, Jim," quavered Emmeline ecstatically, shrinking further back in the shadows, almost suffocated by her heart's quick throb. It was coming then, the decisive word for which she hoped. She would never have to go back and endure her father's rage, her mother's feeble ineffectuality. She stirred, and her voice broke as again she whispered his name.

"Well, what's come over you tonight?" he retorted good-naturedly. "What you're afraid of? Come out into the light where a feller can see your pretty mug—and give me a kiss and tell me you're proud to be goin' to the Elks with the best dressed man in Hyme, wearin' silk socks on him and patent leather pumps. What you got to match 'em?" he concluded with a chuckle.

Emmeline's heart sank, and she grew very cold, as she humbly whispered, "Nothin'." The man's hand dropped to his side in astonishment, as he repeated "Nothin'!" Then his jaw relaxed, and the lighted cigarette fell, a momentary spark upon the pavement. There was a pause, then his egoism reasserted itself.

"Stop your kiddin'," he boasted, wrapped in his arrogance. "There ain't a girl in Hyme what wouldn't be tickled to death to stand in your shoes. You're just joshin' so as to knock me silly when you meet me tomorrow, all togged out in your pretties."

Emmeline pushed the hair back from her aching forehead with a weary ges-

ture. It was so impossible to make him understand.

"Oh, Jim," she faltered, desperate in her need for sympathy, "it's true; I haven't anything new—" Hesitating, she blurted: "I did buy some things, but I got fined in the shop for makin' a mistake, and father was that mad at my not bringin' home more money that he knocked me about cruel. Look at that." Her voice rose shrilly hysterical, and she came boldly into the circle of light from the street lamp and displayed her poor battered face to his scrutiny.

Jim bent forward, staring fixedly where the reddened print of finger marks glowed like a burn, and already the eye above was swollen and almost closed.

"My, you're a beaut!" he shouted coarsely. "Think I'm goin' to take a gal like that to the Elks? Not on your life." There was a sudden stunning silence, then he added emphatically: "I bet you deserved just what you got. I know Dan O'Grady, and he ain't unreasonable."

Emmeline stood staring at him; for a second she thought she would faint, then suddenly strength ebbed back into her veins, a cloud fell from before her eyes. Even as her father's brutality had snapped the bonds of filial obedience, so this man's coarse egoism dissolved his fascination. She was free. She knew men now—the precious gift of youth lay in her hands. She would shape and choose her life. With a glad, wild note of mingled bitterness and exultation, she laughed aloud, then started running up the quiet street.

It was "only a dollar," but it had changed the course of a human soul.



NUISANCES: The struggle for existence.

Advice.

Professional Southerners.

Postage stamps.

The woman who leaves powder on your coat.

ZENIA

By Ezra Pound

WHO am I to condemn you, O Dives,
I who am as much embittered
With poverty
As you are with useless riches?

II

As cool as the pale wet leaves
of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn.

III

(EPITAPH)

Leucis, who intended a Grand Passion,
Ends with a willingness-to-oblige.

IV

Come let us play with our own toys,
Come my friends, and leave the world to its muttons,
You were never more than a few,
Death is already amongst you.

V

She had a pig-shaped face, with beautiful coloring,
She wore a bright, dark-blue cloak,
Her hair was a brilliant deep orange color
So the effect was charming
As long as her head was averted.

VI

I join these words for four people,
Some others may overhear them.
World, I am sorry for you.
You do not know the four people.

VII

As a bathtub lined with white porcelain,
 When the hot water gives out or goes tepid,
 So is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion,
 O my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady.

VIII

The bashful Arides
 Has married an ugly wife,
 He was bored with his manner of life,
 Indifferent and discouraged he thought he might as
 Well do this as anything else.

Saying within his heart "I am no use to myself,
 Let her, if she wants me, take me,"
 He went to his doom.

IX

All the while that they were talking the new morality
 Her eyes explored me.
 And when I arose to go
 Her fingers were like the tissue
 Of a Japanese paper napkin.

X

SIMULACRA

Why does the horse-faced lady of just the unmentionable age
 Walk down Longacre reciting Swinburne to herself,
 inaudibly?
 Why does the small child in the soiled-white imitation
 fur coat
 Crawl in the very black gutter beneath the grape stand?
 Why does the really handsome prostitute approach me
 in Sackville Street
 Undeterred by the manifest age of my trappings?

XI

(TAME CAT)

"It rests me to be among beautiful women.
 Why should one always lie about such matters?

I repeat:
 It rests me to converse with beautiful women
 Even though we talk nothing but nonsense,

The purring of the invisible antennæ
 Is both stimulating and delightful."

CADGE DIRKSMELTER, DRAMATIC CRITIC

A Page from the Book of Broadway

By George Bronson-Howard

For several months THE SMART SET has been running George Bronson-Howard's stories of New York's subterranea, under the caption, "Pages from the Book of Broadway." For the first time the true epic of Broadway is being written. These stories of authentic and unconventional life are genuine literature and distinctly American. We consider them the most important documents in fictional form appearing in this country today. Mr. Howard knows his people and his locale better than any other writer in America.

To the exceptional man there is no more mystery about women than about cabbages. By this (lest we be triumphantly refuted) is not meant the merely successful specialist in money-making, science, statistics, or anything else that has swallowed up all the other brain cells—for Dirksmelter was that; but he whose business and pleasure it is to read in the Book of Life. To such, in return for perfect understanding, women give willingly all they have.

It is not these, who have been treated well by women, but the average man, plain of face and mind—who is responsible for the romantic nonsense about her. Mystery—because she must always conceal from him the truth, lest he weep for his shattered ideals and depart. Modesty—because he likes to believe his ideal has a thousand times more than himself. Higher Morality—because she has no use for him except as a provider, hence no passion. The average man is deprived, by sheer respectability, of ever knowing what woman's love means; therefore he talks most about it and invents high-sounding names for his shell to explain the utter worthlessness of kernels.

But the worst are they who write about it, and worst of the worst was Cadge Dirksmelter, now and for some years past "dramatic critic" of the New York "Argus."

II

If there is one thing more than another that makes wise men laugh, it is those highly moral and instructive articles signed with the names of well known actresses. Miss So-and-So, who claims girls can go straight on seven dollars a week because she has done so—the same Miss So-and-So, whose advance agent has instructed half the country's hotel clerks to arrange adjoining rooms for her and her leading man. Miss Never-Mind-Who, who, "discussing early chorus days, claims mamma always chaperoned her—"of course": Miss Never-Mind-Who, who in those days had a dim belief "chaperon" was female for "chauffeur." Miss Who-Do-You-Think, who has disguised herself, and, detective-guarded, descended underworld-ward "local color" gathering for new parts: although such scenes were quite familiar to her when she was an obscure actress. And so forth and so on, until an entire Broadway mythology is slowly created.

The other day, a cigar chewing press representative sank back in his chair, closed his eyes and conjured out of smoke wreaths the methods by which the name of that most recent of stars, Miss Beth Bohun, had attained electric

lights—spending, for instance, many years in cloistered study of stage classics: learning French for undeleted Molière, German to be free of unhallowed translations of Schiller, Goethe and Lessing: Spanish for unexpurgated Echegeray. Had he known of a Chinese Shakespeare, no doubt she would have been proficient in Celestial sing-song. Then into stock for five years, refusing numerous Broadway offers solely to play the great Shakespearean and other classical roles. Then...

But what does all this profit us when we know the true story?

Really her career began (although she had never heard of him at the time) with the publication of Dirksmelter's plays; but for which he would have continued a police reporter to his death; unless, at Oslerian incapacity, discharged and given, in pity, a position as night watchman or stage doorkeeper. This same fate, also, had his managing editor *read* the plays—very bad plays published at his own expense—or rather at the expense of his wife; who, for more than a year, had inked the holes in her shoes, and turned up the collar of her light jacket when in winter time she sallied forth, basket on arm, bargaining with butchers for odds and ends of meat and second-best vegetables. Who, also, revived acquaintance with her former occupation of "vest finishing," to bring their publication nearer. But she did none of these things for wifely love; but through a laughable ignorance of the theatrical and publishing businesses; accepting his own belief that the issuance of these plays in book form would speedily put him in a class with one popular dramatist who had received a quarter-million in royalties from a single piece and another who had bought an English castle from the proceeds of a dramatized novel. "Once I manage to get them read . . ." he often hinted darkly. One inferred that *then* there could be no doubt about immediate production and immense success.

Mr. Dirksmelter belonged to that unfortunate class that, having ambition without ability, and being devoid of introspection, a sense of values or a knowledge of standards, imagines the world in

league against them. His short stories had been refused by every magazine, known or unknown, most of them even by the editor of his own Sunday Supplement. His plays had been entered in every possible contest wherever English was spoken, and had reposed in the offices of every known manager, of almost every publisher; until, a year before, they had encountered the Badgerton-Beale Company, whose business was not to sell books to the public but to their own authors. To Dirksmelter these gentlemen made a "sporting proposition." They "had faith in his plays" . . . They would publish and push them until the literary and theatrical worlds were aware of the genius they had been neglecting. But they would not take the customary base advantage of an unknown genius's usual ignorance of business to mulct him of the astounding profits that should ensue—let other unprincipled (and better known) publishers do *that!* These had the interest of unknown genius at heart: their lifework was to see unknown genius got what it deserved!—therefore, would be its partners in publishing its work, of the cost of which (five hundred dollars) they would furnish half, plus heavy expenses of advertising . . .

Their actual method was, of course, to print a few hundred galley proofs, cut them into 12mo length and bind them along with cheap pirate reprints; pocketing more than one-third of the two hundred and fifty Dirksmelter furnished, after a year and a half of savage saving. To which was soon added an extra fifty from author's purchases—of many volumes in addition to that half a dozen furnished "free." So copies of the great work came into the possession of all prominent managers; and Dirksmelter, relaxing with happy sighs, awaited a deluge of fame and fortune.

Fortunately he also bethought himself to present one, in person, to his managing editor; that this idiotic autocrat might observe what manner of genius was wasting itself upon police reporting. And thus came his reward; for the few literary critics to whom the publishers sent the book, familiar with

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the shady methods of its publication, refused to recognize it save in a chronicle of "Books Received," and managers' readers, remembering the plays from manuscript, tossed the volume aside angrily. But when the managing editor turned its pages idly it was without knowledge of publishers or plays, only with the remembrance of a dramatic reviewer's post to fill, the current incumbent having resigned to alliterate in the interests of a "big show." So the city editor was sent for.

"How's this man Dirksmelter?" he was asked. Having replied non-enthusiastically, he was tossed the volume of plays, his superior adding: "You know what the Big Fellow always used to say: 'No good for anything else? Make him dramatic editor!' . . . Read the book? . . . Neither did I. But all the highbrows publish their plays nowadays; and the magazines are going in for highbrow criticism. Maybe, for a change that might be better than the funny-dog stuff Kauffman did—hey?"

"I'd be just as glad to have a different district man," returned the city editor, a specialist in first principles. "Lots of times we'd 'a' been beat in his without the 'flimsies' . . . And, far as dramatic criticism goes, don't seem to make much difference who writes 'em—nobody reads 'em 'cept theatrical people, that is, and would-be's. Public goes to see the show that advertises most. . . . And—anyhow—you couldn't get a *good reporter* to take the job. Septimus Drake's criticisms're syndicated, and he only gets *seventy-five*; and the best known in the States—while any good reporter makes a hundred any good week. But Dirksmelter never got over his *thirty-five* guarantee 'cept when some cyclone broke; so I s'pose he'll be glad enough to take your *forty regular*."

III

So Dirksmelter was apprised of his appointment and had hard work to keep from turning somersaults. Had the wages been less, he would have accepted and put his family on short rations. A chance to show up these ignorant managers! . . . to make them pay for their

slighting of his work!! Actors, too, star actors who had returned his scripts!!! Playwrights who had written him discouraging letters!!!! He went to his first opening night as a Corsican to his first *vendetta*. The next morning, the world would know what sort of a fellow was he whose light they had been smothering. . . . But it did not prove the triumph he had expected. He was ashamed to be seated so far down front, he in his shabby, dusty clothes, surrounded by men and women in evening dress—even his fellow "critics," whom he recognized from their published photographs, were so attired—and the play was one by a leading British dramatist of the new school, whose life had been one long fight against the very dramatic conventions that Dirksmelter had come to deride; although he did not know precisely what they were.

So he was sadly ill at ease until his attention was attracted to the majority of the "critics" stalking out in the middle of the third act; and then he saw his chance. He would begin his private war with those same critics: would begin his maiden notice with the unfairness of reviews based on the lesser nine-tenths of the play; and upon this excellent point he would harp in future, convincing the stray reader it was his duty to read the one who was not like other critics.

At the same battered desk that had served him as reporter, he wrote, with all the glow of one who feels he is attracting attention to himself, and purely by accident, the only sane "criticism" accorded the new production; for, having begun with his tirade against his dull brothers, and while sitting palm in hand thinking of equally unpleasant things to say about dull theatrical managers, he was attracted by some information yielded by the program at which he had been steadily staring. It bore the name not of a well known producer but of one of many of the new societies for stage uplift. Another idea seized him. It was the custom of the critics of the Manhattan dailies to deride drama societies, to call their productions "not plays, mere conversations." With regard to the present play he had meant to do the same: the

British insurgent had discarded all the time-worn devices Dirksmelter had been taught to recognize as drama. But the name of the Uplift League changed that. It was against the managers, too. He would use it as a bludgeon with which to swing on managerial conks, yet hide his personal malice under the guise of drama developing. But, having no exact idea of what the play meant, he ascended some dark and dirty steps and dived into filedom, discovering the insurgent's aims and ambitions, reasons (apart from purely commercial ones) for writing plays and many reviews of this one from the more enlightened London prints. Of all this he wrote a careful paraphrase intended to prove that he was quite as enlightened as the insurgent himself: a brother-in-arms; hinting broadly that he, alone of all New York reviewers, was capable of appreciating such greatness . . .

Now it has been often proved that entire ignorance is better than a little knowledge. Out of Monte Carlo come frequent tales of the greenhorn gambler who by taking foolish risks closes a table for the day. Out of Indiana come country schoolmasters with best-selling romances worse written, more ridiculously conceived than the worst hack writer would dare. Out of the Bowery come songs that sweep the country, containing near-rhymes that offend even the unrhythmical ears of Tin Pan Alley *jongleurs*. . . . And the discoverer of America was seeking Cathay!

So in his ignorance Dirksmelter dared to do an unprofessional thing: dared risk the ridicule of a united brotherhood. For his complete ignorance of the play's purpose might have been revealed in any line of his paraphrase and would have left him at the mercy of the many he had exorcised: who would, vengefully, have made him so ridiculous that his resignation would have been requested. But Luck had looked over his shoulder and guided his pencil; and, within the next few days, he had won notoriety that, in his greediest dreams, he had not the imagination to conceive; his only rivals in a sea of advertising the queens of vaudeville and the fairies of soap. Small was the fame of best-selling novelists and

popular playwrights beside that which looked up at him from every third ash-can and every sixth billboard. His name thereon was in larger letters than the plays, while those of the author's were no larger than the least of his lightest words. The fact that Cadge Dirksmelter (*N. Y. Argus*) had approved of the Insurgent, and of the Uplift League, seemed to be of more importance for the public to know than the fact that women should wear only certain corsets or that men should drink only certain ryes.

"You see," he pointed out to his wife, when she had urged some ridiculous reason for replenishing her ancient wardrobe. He had taken her for a walk—after dark, of course, so that the well known critic might not be observed openly to associate with so shabby a female—and was discovering his name in the most remote and inaccessible places, often in letters a foot high. "Suppose you were a stranger to me," he went on, "and you saw all that advertising and then saw such a well known man in old wornout clothes when everybody else had on dress suits—dress suits," he added, proudly and with the air of possession; for did there not repose at home such a suit? Later, attired in it, with trousers and coat lapels in knifelike creases, a ready-made bowtie fastened with elastic around a choker collar, and a square cut white waistcoat that looked like a stage parlor maid's apron; yes, even with black bone buttons for studs, his egotism failed to appreciate any marked difference between what looked back from the mirror and what the artist for the ready-made clothes company had drawn, with a young Apollo in one of a Fifth Avenue tailor's masterpieces for model.

And yet, far from being satisfied, that exasperating woman of his had again whined. It was a whine she was to repeat for many months to come; especially when she came to imagine that, if new apparel was also hers, she might occupy that other orchestra chair beside her husband—for all reviewers receive a pair of seats—that, nightly, was unoccupied. But she never did; which was unlucky for Dirksmelter in two ways, for it not only gave the manager of the Hy-

perian Theater an excuse to seat Bessie Boone alongside the "critic" one night, but also gave Bessie her excuse to be merciless later on, when she heard of this monumental selfishness.

IV

BUT we must be content with the ill-luck of the moment. Dirksmelter did not recognize it for what it was; seeing only the pretty girl for whom the theater manager, leaning over his chair, besought his gentle mercies: "the house sold out . . . an old friend."

Dirksmelter thought her a divine innocent, as she sat beside him prattling artlessly of the play and its people, some acquaintances. Yes, she was on the stage; although it was no place for a girl without influence; and so she was playing a "bit" in a piece soon to open; she, of many *ingénue* leads, and most difficult juvenile character work in stock and in "number threes"; but, "just as he said in his charming criticisms: 'money, not art counted nowadays.'"

She smiled up at him with childish wistfulness. Would she have supper with him? She was not quite sure it was quite the nice thing; people talked so, and it was hard enough for a girl to keep her reputation in this profession, even when she never did *anything*; he understood, *didn't* he? But to prove she appreciated the honor, wouldn't he have tea at her little place tomorrow? If he would, she would sing aloud for joy. She had read everything he had ever written and she thought he was too wonderful for words!! Yes—really! He mustn't be so modest. . . . With the consequence that Mr. Dirksmelter formed no very clear idea of what the evening's performance was about. But he would have formed the wrong one anyhow, so no harm was done.

Lest her gross machine-made flattery be deemed too "raw," it must be remembered he had been a critic nearly a season now; hence a conspiracy was afoot to convince him he was quite the most important person in the city. He had been the honored guest of international "stars." Famous actresses sent him mon-

ogrammed Christmas presents. Managers seemed to defer to his judgments in casting plays. Long since, he had ceased paying for his own suppers after the show—some actor, playwright or manager was willing, even anxious, to be bored for several hours in addition to paying the bills. Moreover, he had been introduced to subtler systems of flattery: had been invited by two managers to read those unsolicited plays which pour in from all corners of the globe; and in which no manager has ever been known to find a paying production, the real plays coming from agents, or along with letters of introduction. Formerly legitimate salaries had been paid to expert play readers; but now the managers made sure of reaping at least *some* profit from such salaries; finding them an excellent bait for poorly paid critics. The fish once hooked, it was a certainty he would rise to his new income and then fear to lose it by angering with ill advised rebukes the holder of line and hook.

Dirksmelter had accepted one such job and was considering another; while a third manager had given him a contract to novelize all successful plays produced by his firm; for which he would receive on each a substantial advance and one-half the royalties. So that, with flattery in such substantial forms, it was not strange he took as his right and heritage the eager admiration of one young girl.

"I have seats just like this for every opening night," he told her, when she expressed her gratitude at being able to see the show "so far down front"—"we professionals, you know, always get the back rows"—"and," he added portentously, "I never have occupied but one. I'm famous for it. But then I never met anybody I wanted to take before. If you'd like to go with me, hereafter, until you open . . ."

As she said (to Norman MacKinder, her companion of recent stock days, seated on her trunk in one of those small hotels in the forties), really he was the most ridiculous jay to be seen outside the tank towns, and how he had got to be critic she couldn't for the life of her imagine. Whereat Norman had returned fiercely that she was never to

mind what sort of a jay he was; he was their first chance in five years to amount to anything along the Big Lane, and if she didn't manage it so they did, he, Norman, would know the reason why.

"But, *Norman*," she protested, making a little mouth of disgust. Privately, she had decided to do just that; but she wanted it to seem that she was being forced into it against her own delicate refinement of nature. But Norman only growled. He was quite well aware of this.

"If you could only *see him!*" she went on. "He's got a funny face like a corkscrew, and little piggy eyes, and he wears a funny little pinched-in hat, and a gray tie with his dinner coat. And he's tall and skinny, and has a funny nose and those funny eyeglasses that droop down and look like they're going to slide off—like those cartoons of the 'Common People'—you know. And you ought to have heard him tonight—criticizing the play about not being true to life; saying society people didn't act that way. I was nearly sick from not laughing. Him criticizing what was society! It was awful."

"Yes, but it's more awful playing one-night stands, sleeping in your clothes in day coaches or sitting up half the night waiting for the four-hours-late local to take you to the next water tank," growled Norman, one of the idols of those same "tanks"; long and lean of figure and with a handsome, dissipated face. "Or playing two-a-day stock, rehearsing for next week all morning and studying your part all night—I'd sooner be dead than go back to it. And what chance has a couple like us on Broadway without some pull? 'Tisn't as if we were wonders at anything—there's thousands as good-looking and can act as well. Don't kid yourself you're any Cleopatra for looks; and if you frame up better than the average of these dolls, it's only because I made you can those chippy styles you used to wear. . . . But it seems you've made a hit with this gink, and though he's a natural born idiot and as ugly as Billiken, you just kid him along until he lands you something worth while. . . . And quit that pretending you hate to do it, too. It's just natural born in you

women to love admiration, even if it's only from the bootblack on the corner. And, as for leading a man on and laughing at him up your sleeve, you like it better than eating—and the only dames that don't do it are those that're too ugly to get anybody to lead on; and so they pretend they're too good for it—"

"Oh, *Norman*, how can you have such a low opinion of me?" she asked, shedding tears. "It's those other low women you've had who've given you such ideas. I'm not like *them*, I want you to know." She advanced on him with open arms, but he repulsed her.

"That's what every woman kids herself into thinking about herself and about the last woman," he returned imperturbably. "The only man who gets you right is the one who knows all that stuff's the bunk. The Chinese and the Turks have got the right idea about you—you haven't any souls. Nor any ideas, either, except what we put into your heads. If it hadn't been for me teaching you how to dress and act, you'd 'a' been playing the tanks and flirting with granglers till you got into the Actor's Home. So you do just what I tell you—understand?"

"Oh, *Norman!*" she said, tearfully, but in accents of admiration. He permitted her caress. "Now," he said, "I'll tell you how to manage this critic guy so we'll both be wearing diamonds."

V

HAD Nature given Mr. Dirksmelter even an elemental sense of humor, one glance at his shaving glass would have convinced him no woman with any choice would have chosen him. But, had he been given a sense of humor, his face would have been a different face. He imagined, of course, that his wife worshiped him as a god, but he did not know how comparatively easy is housework compared to sewing on vests for ten hours daily. He imagined, also, from their flattering attentions, that several well known actresses concealed an ardent regard for him; whereas they merely wanted what well known actresses generally want from critics, and

took good care never to receive him alone. And, as he was under the delusion that the play-reading and novelization jobs had been given him solely because of his transcendent ability, deeming himself a superior person to whom the entire theatrical world looked to be cleansed of its sins, it was without much difficulty that Bessie Boone convinced him that she was quite mad about him—but his wife stood in the way. If only he were not married . . .

His knowledge of women was of the primitive sort most men possess. There were good women and bad women. Man was the natural enemy of good women, pursuing, luring, tempting them; and was quite unworthy of a good woman's love. Only the love for one, unallied with thought of sex, could make him worthy to "touch the hem of her garment"—any hem. A good woman might love a man desperately, might be willing to die for him; but would never pander to a man's low passions—if he were low enough to wish her to; which "any decent man" was not. Every time a good woman loved a married man, there was material for a "big throbbing play of genuine heart interest," in Act III of which man, the immoral, weakened under the stress of passion, was brought to a realization of his shameful insults by her calm, lofty nobility of character; expiating his crime in some gallant entr'acte off-stage deed, so that Act IV could show her burying her beauty in a nunnery—or, else, *she* died (on stage), and he swore to prove his love by devoting his great talents to some noble work. . . .

Whenever Dirksmelter saw such a play he waxed fervent in his praise of its "masterly grip of human cross-purposes," "its relentless delineation of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit . . ."

Consequently, Bessie Boone had little trouble in convincing him that any attempts at kisses or caresses were insults. All of which had been accurately foretold by Norman MacKinder, after having arranged to meet Bessie on Broadway "by the merest chance" and to talk to Dirksmelter for half an hour, alone,

over several tongue-loosening glasses of whiskey.

But what he had not foretold was that Dirksmelter would carry the joke so far as to embark upon a carefully arranged off-stage climax of his own; telling his wife he had never really loved before, "had never known the meaning of the word"; and that it was "a greater sin to live with a wife one did not love than with a mistress one did"; so, if *she* really loved him, she would prove it by giving him his liberty; for those who really loved would sacrifice all to see the loved one happy . . .

Now Dirksmelter, to his wife, represented all the comforts of home, all the restful security of having shifted the problem of food and lodging, permanently, to another's shoulders; and, as she was now possessed of new clothes—gifts of an uneasy conscience—and was planning ways and means to get her share of all the extra moneys now coming in from play-reading and novelization, and had picked out a more expensive flat farther downtown, she burst into wild protestations of love that would never die. She had given him "the best years of her life"; she was "the mother of his children"; she "called Heaven to witness" that she would "sooner die than see him in the arms of another woman"—that scheming woman who only wanted his money and his fame; whereas she, his wife, had loved him when he was poor and unknown. . . . It was no psychic knowledge of Miss Beth Bohun (to be) that prompted the accusation: it was what is always said of the other woman under like circumstance. And Dirksmelter, having never looked on the face of Truth, only on its sentimental imitation, saw no reason to doubt her sincerity. So it was long before he dared break the silence by suggesting he meant to do the "right thing."

At which her heart leaped. To be free of him, to be no longer compelled to listen to him read aloud passages from his own works and pretend to be interested, to be free to patronize moving pictures, which he despised and forbade, to read the bonbon-wrapped fiction which she loved but could never bring into the

house, to go about all day in a kimono and without corsets, and to devote to her children the time necessary to keeping the house and his clothes in what he called order—to be free—yet still to have a home and not to earn it as a wife on salary! The vision was one she had had once when he had been taken down with his annual bronchitis and the doctor had looked grave. At that time she had stolen off to his desk in the next room to stare mechanically at the dancing figures on his life insurance policy. And for three or four days the wild hope endured; while she worried the nurse with offers of useless assistance, and made him little delicacies which she knew he would not be allowed to touch—favorites of hers that she could afterward devour in secret; earning the eulogy of the nurse, "the most devoted wife I ever saw: how she loves you, Mr. Dirksmelter!"

But whether she had done these things for fear her secret might be discovered, or because she wished to convince herself she harbored no such wicked thoughts, who can say? But now, facing a realization of her highest hopes, the same mixed motives resulted in a second statement that she would "sooner die"—this time "rather than take a penny of his money." Did he think the *money* made any difference? How like a man! How little he understood a woman's love! She wished he had never had any more than at first—then he would always have been hers. It was the money that had parted them. She hated the money. She would "work her fingers to the bone" to support "his children" (never by any chance hers also) but "accept his money? Never!"

He argued, he pleaded, he implored. Finally, when she saw he was too weak, too hoarse, to argue, plead or implore further, she weakened "for the children's sake"; and, before the evening was over, it was settled that he would give her half of his earnings for the six months she must spend in Reno divorcing him; and would draw up papers at his lawyer's next day, agreeing to pay her something more than a third for the remainder of his life after the decree had been granted. Also he would take out an

extra insurance policy, like the former in her favor.

The interview, punctuated by choking sobs on her part, was terminated by a burst of wild weeping, during which she slammed and locked the bedroom door; from behind which he could hear her tragic references to her "poor abandoned babies," who ungratefully protested in sleepy voices against any mid-nocturnal manhandling. All during the night, as he lay on the uncomfortable "library" davenport, he heard occasional repetitions of these various forms of hysteria; and he felt more than ever like a man in "a big throbbing play of genuine heart interest"; one of those who profess to wonder, hypocritically, why so many women love them so deeply; privately quite sure there is nothing at which to wonder. So, following their example, Cadge Dirksmelter cursed his fatal fascination.

His wife's sobs that he heard were real enough now—quite as is the custom of the sex, she was sobbing for sheer joy. At last she could have the wallpaper and the Brussels carpets she fancied and wear the kind of clothes he said were "not fit for decent women to wear." Why, even as she was, she knew she had not lost her fascination—had she not detected tender tones in the grocer clerk's conversation over the wire, and hadn't that book agent plainly shown his disappointment when he found she was not "Miss"—as he had imagined from her looks? . . .

VI

On the floor of Congress, if Senator Smith will help keep the tariff on ink-wipers (which the constituents of Senator Jones mainly manufacture), said Jones will reciprocate on pin cushions, the major manufacture of Smithian constituency. On the floor of the Foyer, Critic Brown discovers that Critic Robinson's friend is an actress of "no mean ability," so that said Robinson may be willing to render similar services to Brownian friends.

So Dirksmelter, having long since made peace with the critical fraternity,

which in the case of a success was willing to understand that a man must not hesitate to succeed—Beth Bohun (she was now so styled at MacKinder's command) had been discovered to the readers of Manhattan newspapers, as—(1)—a "young actress of rare charm, whose talents were almost buried in the minor part of 'The Milliner'";—(2)—"one whom it was my fortune first to see last night, and whom I shall expect to see often again in larger parts if our obtuse managers show even their usual glimmering of perspicacity";—(3)— . . . "a flapper who did not flap in vain for, even in her attempted obscurity, her tiny chirping rang truer than the cackling of the hens and the crowing of the roosters"—to quote the more prominent self-advertisers. All agreed that here was a pulchritudinous and artistic "find" and it behooved managers to give it speedy recognition.

Personally, F. Earle Abrams, producer of the piece, had seen nothing unusual in Miss Bohun; nor did he, even after reading the reviews—he was well aware of the Dirksmelter connection and of consequent "critical" procedure. But, being Semitic, he resented nothing that would injure business; only sought to twist it to serve his ends. Here was a chance to get gratis publicity worth many thousands—how best advantage himself by it? Rejecting several obvious methods, he remembered he had on his hands a play by a foreign dramatist, the large advance royalties on which would be forfeited, or another huge advance paid, unless it was done before a certain date. He had ordered the piece on the strength of the author's current London success; and on its delivery had cursed copiously on finding it one of those daring affairs that have a single chance of enormous success to ninety-nine of dire failure. It all depended on how the shrieking climax of Act II would be received—an orgy frankly Bacchanalian; and, though the public might be enthusiastic if left alone, he feared fierce denunciatory critical comment, that might bring Police Department censors with orders to close the theater or excise the ob-

jectionable scene. And—the fore and aft portions of the play being but an excuse and a reason for that scene—deletion, even revision, of it would leave a sorry piece of dramaturgy.

If only he could start with the right foot—with critical approval; such had been his despairing cry when he first read the play. And now it seemed that Miss Beth Bohun might be the treadle to set that right foot automatically in motion. So, cautiously, he began investigations; and in the course of the next few weeks each reviewer was caught alone and informed that Mr. Earle Abrams had been profoundly impressed by his notice of "that wonderful little girl, Miss Bohun."

"You're sure the picker right enough," Mr. Abrams would continue jovially; "you for the eye every time. You got me for my little plot, didn't you? I oughta known you'd make her for the genius she is even in a 'bit.' I only put her in so she'd have some small change while she was training for the biggest part the old lane ever saw. When I got the play last year I knew there wasn't a chance for a Broadway woman to look the part—innocence and all that. But it had to be *played*, too. So I started prowling the stock companies from Maine to Augusta, and I was about ready to chuck the piece when I saw this little girl in Gloucester stock. I meant to sneak in on rubber heels, though, and give Broadway the shock of its life. But you go and get me first crack outta the box. Say, don't wise up anybody to what I've just told you, though, and we might put it over yet. Promise." This tale he told everyone but Dirksmelter—to whom he claimed he was giving the chance to the young lady solely because he loved Dirksmelter like a brother; adjuring him also not to tell.

It was on receipt of this information that the great Act III scene of the throbbing human nature drama had been played; and, a week later, Mrs. Dirksmelter and abandoned progeny were off for Reno, and Dirksmelter was with Bessie planning roseate futures. No longer would his gauzelike wings

of genius be tawdried by contact with a drab woman. He would be the husband of one who, though a great artiste, still revered him as the master of her fate, and was humbly subject to the master's commands and criticisms. Together they would inaugurate a new era in American theatricals. As for the weekly drain of alimony that must be paid for the liberty necessary to inaugurate this Golden Age, that would be made up a hundredfold by the great artiste's salary, which, as her manager, he would handle. True, she was to receive a very small monetary consideration for playing the great part; but it was the chance that counted. Afterward, a hundred blank contracts would be forced on her; and he could resign his position to take his rightful place in the world.

It was about this time that she declared to MacKinder that, future or no future, she would go mad if she had to stand this man much longer—so irritating the actor that he pursued her through her two rooms with fist upraised and violent words outpouring; until, too breathless to dodge around the brass bed longer, she surrendered.

"You let me hear any more of that stuff," her conqueror breathed heavily, "and you'll not only see him but you'll need a heavy veil to do it in, too. Quite now—when everything's framed *right*? Didn't Abrams tell you he was only giving you the job because of the notices you'll get? D'you think he'd let you have it for a single minute if he heard you'd split out from this mutt? You let me hear any more of that and I'll make you think Simon Legree was a gentle philanthropist. . . ."

"Oh, Norman—how can you be so *brutal*?" she whimpered, sidling up to him. "I hate you, you—you sweetest thing in the world, you!" But Norman only shook her off, growling. His temper had not improved in the months he had been idle; he did not relish absence from the public eye; and their savings—in consequence of providing separate establishments—had almost vanished. He, like Bessie, wanted her to be free as soon as possible; but not before she was in a position to demand of managers

that Mr. Norman MacKinder be given leading parts, also.

But Bessie, besides her distaste for Dirksmelter, had a new anxiety—the thought that rapidly slipping away were the six months when she would have no further excuse for remaining other than Mrs. Dirksmelter. And the new piece had not gone into rehearsal until several months after her first New York opening. Only fools make important productions after autumn until the Christmas holidays. They were again delayed that the leading man Abrams wanted might conclude his contract elsewhere. Then rehearsals dragged interminably; and, after weeks of performances to provincials, who, without a New York endorsement, did not know whether to applaud or be shocked, and who, as has grown to be the custom, mostly decided to wait to see it when it had weathered Manhattan's heavy seas, Abrams swore he would lose no more money on the piece; and closed the company until metropolitan "time" could be secured, which gave them another long delay during which those wiseacres who go to out-of-town openings counseled changes as imperative if the piece would live: changes necessitating a native play carpenter and more rehearsals.

Thus the six months had spent themselves by the night of the final dress rehearsal; and the thought of Dirksmelter with a telegram announcing his freedom caused Bessie to give so abominable a performance that Abrams's friends (not in the secret) counseled him, in the names of several demons and deities, to postpone the piece until a leading lady not positively impossible should qualify. Despite his furious recital of this, the girl was too worn with worry to have done better on the following night, had not Norman MacKinder taken a hand, and, from the early morn of the dress rehearsal until the *première* on the following night, spent the remainder of their savings on a hired motor car and champagne at roadside inns, with the nicety of an expert, building her up to that stage of intoxication where one does not brood but is not incapacitated: and depositing her in this condition at

the stage door. Then he hunted up Abrams, and asked that he forbid anyone to see her until after the performance. When that time came, and the girl had been caressed by Norman and applauded for her evening's work, Dirksmelter, almost distracted by her absence of the day, was admitted and—once she saw he did not carry the dreaded yellow slip that released him from matrimony—was reassured of her love. At which he rushed off to his office to write his famous notice—"the play and actress of the century": that notice which was to be quoted on every hoarding in the city—that would look at him satirically for many months later every time he opened a newspaper—that made him the laughing stock of Broadway.

For, after the anxious pair had sat up until early morning to read the reviews, they had found Dirksmelter no longer necessary: almost every newspaper proclaimed that her performance of Dionysia made her one of America's most distinguished portrayers of emotion; although many found fault with the "technique" of the play by one of the master technicians of the playwriting trade!! So at last Norman had allowed her to cast off Dirksmelter; writing at his dictation:

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND:

"This morning, amid all this triumph, I was sad. Here I was famous, through no merit of my own, with prospects of more money than I can spend and what all the papers say is a distinguished career. And there is a poor little woman out in Reno who has none of these things: one who has given her life to you and your children. When I thought of her, I felt sure I would be punished if I allowed my selfish desire for love to

rob her of the only joy life holds for her; and, although my love burns higher and truer for you than ever before, I realize now that the greatest love is proved by the strength of character to put it from one if it is wrong; and that poor sad little woman's face would always come between us, poisoning our days and turning our nights to horror.

"I see my duty to her plainly, and that is why all my future success will never bring me happiness. But I am resolved to be strong. There is another man who loves me devotedly. He has agreed, so great is his love, that, as I can never love him in return, he will live with me as a brother if I marry him. And I *shall* marry him—before you receive this note. Why? So that you will wire that poor little woman in Reno before it is too late and tell her to come back home and bring the children to their father.

"Perhaps you will hate me for what I am doing. But there is One Who Knows. And He knows, and He only, how my heart is torn by what I am about to do. But, dear, 'I could not love you half so well, loved I not honor more.'

BETH."

Dirksmelter, when he received the note, sat in the *Argus* office, waiting to bear Beth the first copy of his wildly enthusiastic notice. When he had read what she had written, the sheets fell from his numb fingers: into which a passing copy boy thrust, as previously requested, the first obtainable copy of the afternoon edition. Mechanically, Dirksmelter opened it: on the rear page, over a Reno dateline, were small headlines announcing that a divorce had been granted to the wife of the well known critic, Mrs. Cadge Dirksmelter, alimony \$2,500 per annum.



MODERN Miracles: The seedless orange—absent treatment—the virtuous chorus girl.



IF you can't be careful, be good.

HIS REPUTATION

By André Tridon

ESTELLE DUMANTEL finally wrenched herself away from the grip of a nightmare; her ears were still ringing with the deafening explosion which must have made every wall of the villa topple down. . . . Another report . . . She sat up in bed, listening. Of a sudden a white phantom climbed into the room through the open window, rolled on the floor and whispered beseechingly:

"Estelle, don't speak a word or I am a dead man."

Gasping with fright, she hid herself under the bedclothes. Gradually she began to understand. The ghost was Raymond de Lourques, her fiancé. Then she heard anguished voices, the rustle of steps on the leaf-strewn garden paths, calls.

"He must have got in here; see that footprint on the flower bed."

Someone rushed toward the house door. She felt she must speak.

"Raymond, please go. They must not find you here."

"I can't go. That idiot Granville has a gun."

"Granville? Isn't he in Paris?"

"No; he came back unexpectedly."

"And he found you with . . ."

There was a knock at the door; someone tried the knob.

"Estelle, open. This is mother."

Estelle, shivering, suddenly grasped the whole situation. Raymond and Madame de Granville! If she betrayed him that meant a scandal, a divorce, the breaking of their engagement, a duel.

"Mother, don't insist; Raymond is here."

"How long has he been there?" a booming voice asked.

"Since—since—I—retired."

A deep silence behind the hostile door; a loud sob; steps that endeavored to be noiseless dragged awkwardly along the corridors. . . .

"Estelle, I don't know how to tell you . . ."

"Don't come near me. Go away—please go."

When his naked foot disappeared over the window sill, Estelle fell back on her pillows, faint, exhausted, moaning hysterically.

At six o'clock she was dressed; in the hall she met her mother who, very pale, simply said: "We leave on the seven o'clock train."

The next day, the maid brought in Raymond's card. Madame Dumantel left the drawing room. Raymond entered, stylish and commonplace, apologetic but firm. He was leaving that very night for Bangkok; the Minister had been kind enough to cable to the legation and hasten matters.

"In two years (attachés, you know, are given no furlough for twenty months) we shall see how our friends are judging that painful—incident. . . . It may be that they will have forgotten it altogether . . . or surmised the truth of the matter."

He silenced all possible objections by adding:

"Estelle, you wouldn't wish to compromise my career. A diplomat cannot marry a woman whose past might—er—owing to—er—unfortunate . . ."

Her eyes aflame with tragic irony, she rose and motioned to the door.

PERTINENT AND IMPERTINENT

By Owen Hatteras

THE BIBLE IN COMSTOCKESE:
The social evil and the liquor traffic take away the heart.—Hosea iv, 11.

For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and *white slave traders*, and murderers.—Revelation xxii, 15.

Neither shalt thou commit a *statutory offense*.—Deuteronomy v, 18.

And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and *gave his wife evidence for divorce*.—II Samuel xi, 27.

That they all might be *darned* who believed not the truth.—II Thessalonians ii, 12.

And he that doubteth is *d—d*.—Romans xiv, 23.

She hath wrought folly in Israel, *to be guilty of technical vagrancy* in her father's house.—Deuteronomy xxii, 21.

His *limbs* are as pillars of marble.—The Song of Solomon v, 15.

PRONUNCIATION OF MUSICAL TERMS IN AMERICAN:

Berceuse—beer-souse.

Andante—and-aunty.

Scherzo—shirts-oh.

Overture—over-choor.

Finale—fine-ally.

Forte—fort.

Etude—ee-tood.

Cantabile—canty-bile.

Mezzo—messo.

Cello—sell-oh.

Prelude—pree-lood.

Minuet—min-oot.

AFTER all is said and done, how many victuals are as genuinely appetizing and nourishing as pigs' feet in *gelée*?

UNIVERSITY—A place for elevating sons above the social rank of their fathers. In the American universities men are ranked as follows:

1. Don Juans.
2. Fullbacks.
3. Boozeers.
4. Pitchers and catchers.
5. Mandolin players.
6. Poker players.
7. Turkey trotters.
8. Scholars.
9. Christians.

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF NEW YORK:

1. The bread line.
2. Diamond Jim Brady.
3. *Harper's Weekly*.
4. Jack's.
5. Ludlow Street jail.
6. Evelyn Nesbit Thaw.
7. Potashes and Perlmutters.

AMERICAN DEFINITIONS:

Oscar Wilde—One who could not write good poetry or prose because in later life he was sent to prison.

Frenchman—An absinthe fiend.

Literature—The works of Henry Van Dyke.

Café—The rendezvous of white slavers—a Gehenna—a resort for criminals, chorus girls, actors and divorcees.

Wine—Champagne.

Et—Past tense of *eat*.

Genius—Longfellow, Shakespeare, Harriet Beecher Stowe. . .

THEATER—A place where bad ideas are filtered through worse actors.

TABLE OF PERCENTAGES showing how much of her charms a lady of fashion may lawfully expose to admiration, according to the time, the place and the man:

	Husband	Ex-husband	Flame	Osteopath	Ladies' Tailor	Cousin	Old Uncle	Young Uncle	Acquaintance	Stranger	Minister	Total Average Exposure
At Home.....	96%	97%	51%	100%	98%	49%	66%	33%	10%	15%	2%	56%
At the Seashore.....	85%	85%	80%	100%	.....	75%	75%	75%	75%	98%	10%	76%
At a Ball (masked).....	50%	90%	40%	.....	.....	30%	87%	60%	90%	99%	.....	68%
At a Ball (ordinary).....	25%	45%	20%	.....	.....	15%	43%	30%	45%	50%	.....	34%
On Shipboard.....	20%	20%	0%	.....	.....	60%	10%	88%	99%	98%	97%	55%
In Hotel Lobby.....	10%	30%	5%	.....	.....	40%	75%	75%	75%	75%	0%	48%
On Camping Trip.....	90%	95%	30%	.....	.....	80%	80%	60%	55%	40%	33%	63%
At the Opera.....	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
Entering Street Car.....	10%	25%	40%	40%	40%	40%	55%	30%	50%	70%	10%	40%
In Hospital.....	0%	0%	0%	100%	.....	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	90%	19%
At Church.....	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	11%	12%	10%
Total Average per Person.....	44%	54%	34%	75%	61%	45%	55%	52%	55%	59%	39%	.....

TEN INEFFABLE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CIVILIZATION:

- The non-refillable bottle.
- Eugenics.
- Trimmed hedges.
- Knights of Pythias.
- Osteopathy.
- Reversible cuffs.
- Pragmatism.
- Rhubarb pie.
- Hell.
- The vice crusade.

SYNONYMS FOR "CONSCIENCE":

- Worry.
- Habit.
- Katzenjammer.*
- Disappointment.
- Liver complaint.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE is the theory that, since the sky rockets following a wallop in the eye are optical delusions, the wallop itself is a delusion and the eye another.

DELIBES—The male milliner of music.
THE REV. DR. HANS SCHMIDT—The Beethoven of murder.

KING GEORGE—An accessory to the throne of England.

IMMORALITY—A compromise between marriage and suicide.

VIRTUE—A deportmental habit.



WHERE THE BLACK MASS WAS HEARD

By James Huneker

To be in Heaven the second, he despairs;
So now the first in Hell and flames he reigns,
Crown'd once with joy and light: crown'd now
with fire and pains.

—PHINEAS FLETCHER (1582).

I AM not a diabolist. I was an agnostic until . . . I have read Huysmans and I do not believe he ever saw half he describes. Yet I, and in commonplace America, have seen things, have heard things, that would make mad the group of Parisian occultists. I dislike publicity, but Vance Thompson has asked me to relate the story, and so I mean to give it, names and all, with the faint hope that it may serve as a warning to callow astrologists, and all the younger generation affected by the writings of impious men who deny the existence of the devil.

More than twenty years ago I was the organist of a Roman Catholic church in the lower part of my city. I had studied the instrument in Germany and believed in Johann Sebastian Bach. I played and pedaled fugues on week days for my own pleasure, and on Sundays executed with unction easy masses by Bordoni, Mercadante and Haydn; my choir was not an ambitious one. The *stipendium* was small, the work light and the two priests amiable enough. One, a German, Father Oelschlager, was the rector. His assistant was an Irishman with French blood in his veins. His name—shall I ever forget his name and face?—was Father Michael Moreau. He was crazy about music and occultism. The former he made no secret of; the latter I discovered only after a long acquaintance. Moreau came to the

organ loft when I practised on week days, sang a little and feasted much on Bach chorales. Urged often to visit his room, I did so, and he showed me rare black letter missals and later the backs of a number of old books whose titles I could not decipher. I am no Latinist, yet I knew these volumes were written neither in Latin nor Greek. The characters I had never seen before, and when I remarked their strangeness, Father Moreau smiled and even laughed as I quoted Poe: "the volumes of the Magi—in the iron-bound melancholy volumes of the Magi."

Music led us to discuss religion, and my friend astonished me by his erudition. His sensitive features would become illuminated when he spoke of the strange tales of the Talmud. "Oh, my God!" he would cry with a patibulary gesture. "Why hast Thou not vouchsafed us more light?" And then would beg for Bach, and on the mighty stream of D minor fugue his harassed mind seemed to float and find comfort. As time wore on he grew morbid, morose, reticent, and devoted himself to all his dull duties with a fanaticism that was almost harsh. The parishioners noticed it, and his reputation for saintliness increased. His confessional was always crowded and his sermons remarkable for the acerbity, the awful pictures he made of the sufferings of the damned and of the relentlessness of God's wrath. His superior, good-natured Father Oelschlager, bade the other look at the cheerful side of the question, to believe more in God's mellowness and sweetness, and would quote Cardinal Newman's

"Lead, Kindly Light" and certain comforting texts from the Scriptures, and then smoke his pipe. But the ascetic temperament of Moreau barred all attempts at palliation or attenuation of the God of Hosts, of the God who laid low the pride of Greece and Rome. Life to him was a cancer to be extirpated, and he confessed to me one night after rehearsal that he had almost doubted God's existence and courted suicide after reading Renan's "Vie de Jésus." I suggested change of scene, less strenuous labors, above all, plenty of the world, the theater and athletics. All advice availed not, and I saw that Father Moreau was fast becoming a monomaniac. His sermons during the hot summer were devoted to the personality of the devil, to his corporeal existence, to his daily presence in the marts of mankind; and so constant was his harping on this theme that Father Oelschlager had to forbid him the subject. "*Es ist so warm, mein Kind!* Why then do you hold forth on hell? Let the poor people hear more of the crystal rivers, the green meads of Judea. It will be more seasonable." Moreau frowned, but obeyed his superior.

With the autumn and winter his habits became more secretive, his visits to me less frequent and his air of detachment most melancholy. Advent saw him a mere wraith of a man, worn by speculation, devoured by an interior flame, a flame that was wasting his very soul to despair. He seldom conversed with me, although I watched him anxiously and occasionally interrogated him regarding his health. At last I spoke to his associate, but encountered an easy-going philosophic spirit, which assured me Father Moreau was going through what some young priests should. He was at the period of unfaith, was nettled by doubt, and after he had wrestled with Satan, won the good fight, he would again become normal. This seemed consoling but vague.

The day before Christmas I promised that I would not send a substitute to play the midnight mass at the church. Our church was the only one in the city

where the old-fashioned mass at twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve was celebrated. It is located near the river, and my journey was a long one, for I lived uptown. I ate a six o'clock supper and went to bed, telling them to arouse me at a quarter before eleven. I wished to be fresh for the early service. By eleven I was out on the street, and took a car bound south. I reached the church in time, and soon the solemn high mass began. My choir had with elaborate care prepared Cherubini's mass, and despite the poor organ, the extra chorus and much enthusiasm, made some effect. The congregation was attentive, and Father Oelschlager delivered a short, happy sermon, urging his flock to rejoice at the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus the Infant Christ, uncrucified, but newly born into a world of toil and sin for our redemption. At the consecration of the host the good rector's beaming faith was most edifying. He was served by Father Moreau, a melancholy deacon, indeed. "*Ite Missa Est*" pronounced, the faithful dismissed, I was overjoyed at the release, for I was tired. The choir chatted about the service, the singing, and at last I was alone. I placed the music books back in the tall Gothic cupboard, shut up the manuals of my instrument and put on my overcoat. It must have been half past one, perhaps quarter of two, and I relished the prospect of my arrival home, where a warm breakfast would be awaiting me, and then once more to bed, for I had to play the regular half past ten o'clock Christmas mass for the benefit of the sleepy ones, who loved their couch better than their Christ.

Father Moreau met me at the bottom of the choir loft steps. He was dressed for the street, his eyes were blazing, and as he took my arm his fingers were viselike. "Will you come with me?" he asked. I was startled. I explained that I would not have much rest, nor should he waste his sleeping time on the dismal, cold streets; besides, I was hungry. I feared that he was about to deluge me with more of his studies in the customs of the early Gnostics, and

to be quite frank, I was worn out and not in a receptive humor for such untoward cryptic wisdom. Any other time—"Will you come with me?" he reiterated, and the clutch on my arm became oppressive. "Where?" I asked, for I hated to affront a friend. "Will you come with me?"

By this time the church was quite empty, and I pushed out into the street. It was dark and was snowing hard. We walked toward the street, and as we neared the corner I heard the lucky sound of a horsecar—there were no trolleys then. I excused myself, ran and caught the car; the priest, following, sat down beside me. I paid both fares, and as I had nothing to say we preserved a sad silence. The mean light, the deserted streets, the lonely car and the muffled strokes of the horses' hoofs on the snow chilled my soul. I looked sideways at Father Moreau. He was reading a big parchment-covered book, which I saw by the dim lamplight was entitled "*Le Satanisme*," by Jules Bois. I was shocked. A priest fresh from the holy sacrifice of the mass devouring the blasphemies that I was sure were in the gruesome volume, alarmed my piety. Presently he saw me and shut its leaves. "There are curious things in it, my dear friend," he muttered, and his voice came from across a waste of sorrow. "Curious things; but you are a believer, are you not?" he eagerly repeated. "I am," I replied devoutly, and I crossed myself. He fairly jumped at me, his eyes wide open and full of devouring flames. "Will you come with me?" he almost screamed, and for the fourth time. "East Street," called out the conductor, and rather than let my half mad companion alone—he surely must have been mad—I left the car with him, the conductor gazing after us with cynical eyes. He took us evidently for belated revellers.

We walked slowly for ten minutes until we arrived in front of a sad-looking church, and then I stopped: "The place is not open yet; they do not have Christmas service until five o'clock." For the last time my companion whis-

pered, "Will you come with me?" and pushing past me, struck three times on the big doors. A small postern gate opened at once and we entered the vaulted passageway. I trembled at the strangeness of the adventure and held fast to Moreau, for it was pitch black, and while I heard soft footfalls beside me—the footfalls of an unknown man—I could not see my hand before my face. We must have traversed a long yard, for the wind blew freely about me; I heard it playing on the housetops like a balloon in distress. Yet it felt as if issuing from a sepulcher, and my heart went to my empty stomach. Even in my growing terror I craved for coffee; its aroma would have made me strong for this inhuman cruise. We went down eleven steps—I counted them—my conductors on either side of me. Dampness and malodors warned me of our proximity to some ancient cellarage, some forgotten catacombs, wherein Father Moreau expected to give me a sacerdotal surprise, a revival perhaps of an antique and early Christian ritual. I feebly applauded his intentions, but wished he had chosen some other time and that the surroundings had been less sinister.

At last we paused and achieved another flight of steps—this time I didn't number them, for the cold was intense, and it was with positive relief that we suddenly arrived in a dimly lighted and warm chapel. It was empty, devoid of pews, of chairs, of furnishings of any sort, except, at the upper end, a small votive altar. Before it swung a lamp of Byzantine workmanship, in which burned a solitary tongue of yellow flame. The lamp swayed rhythmically, and on the altar were two tall tapers, lighted and perfumed. And then my eyes rested on the spot where the tabernacle, surmounted by the gold cross, should have been. Judge of my consternation when I saw, saw as distinctly as I see the pen which traces these letters, a huge bronze serpent, with glistening, overlapping metallic scales. The eyes of this python were almost feminine, and their regard gentle, reproachful and voluptuous. My knees bent beneath me and my face was wet with fright.

"You are a believer, then?" crooned a dull voice in my ear. It was Moreau. He had thrown off his outer wrap and stood in a black soutane. He was white with emotion and said in tenderest accents: "Listen; be my friend. Do not desert me at the crisis of my life. It is to be my first mass, my first *three o'clock mass*. My deacon is already at the altar. Be the solitary worshiper. It will be a low mass—remember, a low mass!" He spoke clearly, rapidly, sanely, and seeing that I had something more than a lunatic to deal with, I removed my overcoat and knelt down near the altar just as Father Moreau ascended its steps, his assistant holding the end of his *black* canonicals. If it had not been for the apparition of the serpent, I might have fancied that I was assisting at the lonely, pious vigil of a parochial curate. But the eyes of the serpent devoured mine, and I had none for the two silhouetted figures that went through with febrile velocity the familiar motions of the mass. It was low mass, and from the *introit* to the *preface* the space was scarcely appreciable. I heard mumblings, and the air became chillier as the celebrants moved and bowed or extended arms; the air grew colder, denser and tenser. It vibrated like the wires of a monstrous zither, and my temples throbbed as if in the midst of a magnetic storm. I felt that I was nearing a great catastrophe, that God had abandoned His universe to its wicked will, and that I must sob, or scream, or pray, or die or be damned forever, or—the tap of the silvery little bell was as if a sweet summer air had swum over my agitated soul. It was the bell that announced the solemn moment when God became man, when the divine spirit, by the miracle of transubstantiation, became flesh and blood.

In an ecstasy of faith, of awe, I plunged on my face and adored and wept, and a mighty wind swept from the altar with strange moanings and lamentings, and the lights were extinguished; yet there was a luminous fog, which enfolded us, and in it I saw the great serpent, symbol of wisdom, symbol of eternity, rear spirally aloft, and be-

neath it—oh, beneath it!—was the Beatific Vision. In swelling nimbus of flame was a counterfeit Mother of God, and holding the hand of Him, of the Infant, Jesus, born but three hours, and—oh, the horror of it!—not *my* Christ, not *our* Christ, not the Christ of the Christians, but an Anti-Christ from some fetid hell, sent to seduce us, curse us, destroy us! My eyes almost burst from their sockets, and the humming of hell's loom roared about me as I met the gaze—of the Woman. And now her eyes were the serpent's eyes, and on her head was the crown of hell and its multiple kingdoms. She was naked, and set against her breasts were sharp swords. She was *Mater Malorum*, and her breath sowed discord, lust and cruel murder. I yearned to pronounce the name of the true Mother of God, to bid this blinding vision, this damnable vision, vanish, but my tongue was like wet twine and my sight blistered by the pageantry of Satan, of Satan and his Dam. And as I struggled the silvery little bell tapped once more, and in a fading perspective I saw the Madonna and the Child give me such a sweet, beseeching glance that my heart dissolved within me, and I cried aloud, my tongue snapping in the roof of my mouth:

"Mary, Mother of God, preserve us from the Devil and all his works!" A withering streak of light struck my eyeballs, and I glimpsed the serpent falling to earth with distended jaws, as two priestly figures reeled off the altar steps, and in the brassy clangor of despair we fell, all three, and swooning blackness shut down upon us like smothering velvet.

It was still dark when solicitous hands lifted me to my feet: my coat was thrown about my shoulders, and I was hurried in shivering gloom to the street. The other one disappeared at the little postern gate, and parting on the outside, with damp, hot hands, and face plastered with hideous passion, the priest said to me, in a cracked voice:

"You have seen *my* God, the only true God of hell—heaven and of earth."

THE WINNER

By Albert Payson Terhune

You remember that astonishing story, "The Girl Who Couldn't Go Wrong," which Mr. Terhune contributed to THE SMART SET several months ago. It was the first of the Raegan stories which since have been appearing each month in this magazine. Raegan is a racy underworld character, and his stories are genuinely different—full of rare, if primitive, philosophy, and possessed of ideas which are far removed from the regulation platitudes which form the basis of most "popular" fiction. Next month appears Mr. Terhune's greatest story, "The Merchant of Venus."

RAEGAN'S partner in the Poultry Show Tango Conservatory had wandered from home and occupation; and had neglected to return. I shall refer hazily to Raegan's partner as "Schuster." For no better reason than that his name—so far as I was initiated into his secrets—chanced to be Schuster. By odd coincidence the cabaret's buxom, dreamy-eyed cashier was also absent from her post of duty.

Therefore—shocked in his ever alert sense of propriety, and forced as well to do double work and to serve as volunteer bank examiner for a new and right unwinsome cashier—Raegan was stirred to the depths. And from those umbershadowed depths, during his first hour of rest, boiled up a froth of Raeganesque philosophy, fringing a perhaps veracious tale.

The door had closed for the night on the last dreary reveler. The new cashier's accounts had been approximately and tearfully balanced under a storm of auditing. Then ensued a period of seismic calm, as Raegan and I sat at a corner table of the odorous basement paradise. The stress of dual duties and of fiscal cares had momentarily ebbed. On the drying sands of their recent flow basked Raegan, in talkative reaction.

"It's sure been some wakeful day,"

he confided to me as he viewed, cross-eyed, his attempts at cigarette rings. "And that poor old hackneyed 'one-armed paperhanger with the hives' was a drowsy-addicted lotos eater compared to me for the last six hours. At that," he mused, "I'm luckier than Schuster. And I've the night's proceeds to bet that he'd give a year's profits to swap places with me, right now!"

Moral reflections—ever sweet—become sublime from Raegan's thin lips. For he has a faculty of meaning what he says; even though he may at times neglect to say what he means. And I witnessed in reverent amaze Saul's initiation to the Prophets' Guild.

"Schuster's envying me a whole lot," pursued Raegan, abandoning smoke rings and strabismus together. "Because I'm where I belong. And he isn't. And, after the first jump, the man who's where he doesn't belong always wants to get back where he does. Whether he's in a harem or in jail. It's all a matter of habit and habitat. Do you know what Schuster's habit and habitat were?

"He lived in a flat up in the early sixties. His wife slept in kid curlers and wore a sleazy green kimono to breakfast; and never cried except when she mashed her finger in the dumbwaiter door or when the quince jelly wouldn't jell. Schuster and she used to have breakfast every morning at eight, and

they drank tea instead of coffee. Each of 'em read the morning papers at breakfast, and the papers' edges used to get in the butter. Then they'd kiss good-bye and Schuster would go to work. He'd be back for dinner at six thirty—maybe—and he'd know what the meal was to be by the time he got to the landing. Mrs. Schuster would be dressed up by then. Unless she'd got tired, shopping. And the dinner would be served by a girl. Not a maid. A girl.

"Schuster'd read the evening paper while he ate and his wife would tell him what had happened during the day. She'd begin with the unpleasant things. For the others didn't make very newsy telling. Then, if it was one of Schuster's nights off, he'd sit in his white sock feet before the asbestos fireplace and play double Canfield, while she embroidered shirtwaists. Or she'd wind up the phonograph. It was the only musical instrument she could ever learn to play. Or else they'd go to a show; and stop for a lukewarm bite at some glass front white-tiled Café des Enfants on the way home.

"That was their family life. And Schuster has left it for a belle who had all the looks Mrs. Schuster never had and a figure that belongs to her—in spots—and a dandy reservoir of talkless words. He's left a treadmill for a merry-go-round. And it's nuggets to nubbins he'd sell what's left of his soul to change back again."

"You've heard from him?"

"I don't need to. I've heard from enough others. They're all alike. If four aces in any one card deck will beat a pair of fives, they'll do it in all the decks ever manufactured. Unless maybe sometimes when I happen to have the deal."

I flashed some glittering platitude about being sorry for Schuster's poor little wife, sobbing her heart out alone in the darkness, her house left unto her desolate. Raegan received my pathos with a scorn that withered me.

"I thought I'd just told you the only things that could make that dame cry," he snorted, "and Schuster ain't one of 'em. Besides, you're in the wrong pew.

You're wasting perfectly good pity on the corner of the good old Eternal Triangle that needs it least. Everybody pities the deserted wife. And, as usual, everybody's barking up a tree after the coon's taken to the grass. Son, paste this in your hat; for it fits every problem of that same moth-eaten Eternal Triangle:

"The wife wins!

"Don't forget that. She is the winner. Whoever she may be. There's no book on the race, for there's only one possible winner. Who else could win? The man? Not in any case I ever knew of. Folks that don't call him a cur call him a mark. And he's both. The other woman? She loses even worse than the man. She gets him away from his wife—for a while. And he and all the rest of the world keep gently reminding her of it. And by and by she loses him. Almost always to the wife.

"No, no. The only one who gets no blame is the noble, deserted wife. Everybody turns in to help her. And at the last, nine times out of ten, she gets her husband back—if she still wants him. (And heaven pity the poor geezer if she does! He's booked to get all his, in *this* world.)

"For he does come back. The feeling that pulled him to her in the beginning, and that made him stick with her till the siren sidetracked him, will crop out again every time; just as soon as the first shine has worn off the new love. Habit will take charge again. It's a way every habit's got; from booze to matrimony.

"Ice cream is fine—for those that don't hate it. But after three meals a day of nothing but ice cream for a while, where's the man who won't try to crawl back again to the good old sirloin steak and fried onions that he's been brought up on? Get the idea? Soon or late, the wife wins. I don't say she always wins what's worth the bother of taking back. But if she wants it, it's hers. Such as it is. The amateur has no more chance, in the long run, against the professional, among wives than among prize fighters. Take Dicky Malone and Mrs. Dicky Malone,

for instance. Dicky's full name was Ephraim Richard Malone. But the 'Ephraim' was silent as in 'phthisis.' And the 'Richard' became 'Dicky,' because he was of the 'Dicky' brand."

I met Dicky (meandered Raegan) when he used to come to the Settlement, courting a gorgeous girl who was down there teaching East Siders how much nicer it was to have a bunch of flowers in the middle of the dining table than an extra pound of corned beef at the carver's end of it. By and by she married Dicky Malone. And everybody was happy. Even Dicky.

Dicky was the kind of boy who had never caused his mother a minute's worry. I admire such lads. So do their mothers. But I'm always just a bit leary about them when they marry. Which is where I differ from those same mothers. I've got a silly idea that every man starts life with only just a certain amount of goodness. And if he uses it all up while he's a bachelor, by never causing his mother a minute's worry, why—his wife's apt some time to come in for a lot of the worry mother missed.

Maybe I'm wrong at that. But some wiser guy than I once said that every man's a polygamist till experience teaches him monogamy's the real thing. And these "never a minute's worry" boys are apt, I find, to take a post-graduate course in worry causing; some time or other after the faithful-and-true-we-lead-ye-forth song and the till-death-do-us-part pledge has tied them up.

Dicky did, anyhow. In a couple of years. Not that he made toad pie of the whole show by running away—like Schuster. No, he didn't blow a whistle or ring a bell or send out any other kind of announcement to the world at large—or his wife in particular—that he was making a wall-eyed wild ass of himself and throwing away his soul's bank account for a near-gold brick.

But when temptation hit him, he had no callous spots from former swats. So he simply doubled up with a grunt of surprise and fell. No noise about it. No elopement. No scandal. Just took

to dropping in, occasional-like, at one of these four-story brownstone, side street, glumly respectable *table d'hôte* restaurant buildings off Broadway—whose proprietors pay four thousand dollars rent and clear a gross profit of eighty cents a day on their dinners and retire in seven years with a fortune of half a million. *Table d'hôtes* that sometimes have as many as seven patrons at once—in the restaurant.

Dicky was amazed. So was the siren. She wasn't That Sort Of Woman. To any great extent. She was married, too; and pretty fond of her husband, in a way. But her husband was no monopolist. She met Dicky and Dicky's wife. And Dicky, from the first, thought she was pretty and vivacious. And Mrs. Dicky thought she was flashy in her dress; and didn't like the way she looked at Dicky.

So Dicky and Mrs. Dicky stopped sparring about her. And Mrs. Dicky supposed Dicky had stopped seeing her, too. And when he was less at home than he'd been—why, it was because he was doing extra office work or taking clients out to dinner.

Dicky never meant to get into any sort of a mess. Not even into a flirtation. But the woman admired him so, and she saw so many clever and lovable and good-looking things about him that had quite escaped Mrs. Dicky's notice. And she had had a broader experience of life than Settlement girls get. And she loved him. It was a soul love, too. She said so, herself. He understood her as her husband never had. And there was another and richer fellow in love with her and just pestering the life out of her with his money and his attentions. And—

Say, what's the use of my adding up the sum any further? You've got the answer. It didn't need half the reasons it had.

It was all over but the shouting. And Dicky—at that time—had just enough sanity left not to shout. As for the woman, a wholesome—if not wholesale—experience had taught her the soft pedal's sterling value. And she did love him. Really loved him. They

do, sometimes. As well as they know how to. He wasn't like the breed of men that such women and their husbands get to herding with. He was "different." That's the shibboleth. "Different!" And that was all there was to it.

Dicky Malone had sense enough, way down in his heart, to know that she didn't belong in the same county with the wife he was cheating. He knew his wife belonged close up to the hearse while this woman was trailing clear back among the buggies and foot mourners.

Sometimes he'd get to thinking that maybe it'd be his duty to marry her if his wife died or if the woman's well broke husband should take a notion to wake up and get a divorce. And at such times Dicky'd fall into an iced sweat and swear he'd turn square again. Besides, as the affair stumbled along past the novelty point, he got just a little tired of it. And he wanted to be what he'd once been to his own wife. To the Winner.

But the woman was so pretty. And she loved him so. And—well, a kindergarten athlete would find it easier to break a trained wrestler's hold than a chap with Dicky's ingrowing chin and lack of experience would have in tearing himself free from such a tangle as he'd rolled into. Soft-hearted and vain, says you? Son, I covered those points when I told you he was a man.

The first dazzling wonder of it all was getting tarnished around the edges. And Dicky realized more, every day, what his home-staying wife was and what the woman was. And he'd go sick with shame. Especially when his wife swallowed his stay-out-late excuses so friendly. But there was always the fear the woman would go back to the fellow with cash who'd been stuck on her. Why should Dicky have minded that, if he was getting tired of her? Man nature again. You may be getting tired of life, but I notice you'll jump eleven feet to sidestep a speeding benzine chariot that's threatening to rid you of it.

So things slopped on, till Dicky's "differentness" began to get on the woman's nerves. The first time they'd

dined together neither of 'em had looked once at their food. And the last time, neither of 'em looked once at anything else. She treated him fine, though, for her sort of woman. She had a warm heart, all right, and she was kindly to all weak things. So, instead of tying the can to Dicky in a way to cut into his skin, she just tells him that Friend Husband is getting kind of wakeful and is talking about seven-dollar-a-day detectives; that he's got Dicky on the suspected list; and that they must part unless her whole future is to be ruined.

Dicky, not being wise to that particular old sweet song, emitted a blood-curdling mental yell and ran chattering up a tree. He was new to every move in the game. And he was frozen stiff. He had a velox vision of his correspondence turning into co-responsibility. He pictured the heartbreak and black despair of the simple little wife who had trusted him so, and who had been so willing to let him stay out evenings. He saw his name in the papers at the wrong end of two divorce suits and his clients leaving him and his family prying shut the ancestral doors against him and his friends cutting him. He saw himself getting measured for a large sized letter "A" in scarlet embroidery and having to wear it on his shirt front; to the horror of all New York—where such a complicated and astounding form of crime had never happened before.

In short, he was green. And his feet were very, very cold. And when feet get cold, conscience gets warm. Dicky's began to fry. His conscience. Not his feet. They were numb past all feeling. He walked, dazed and gaping, out of the restaurant where he'd been eating with the woman when she had attached the tin can to him.

And in his first nice fresh spasm of horror, what does Dicky Malone do? Go to his friends for advice? Not he. He's so innocent he thinks they'd stone him from the city gates. But—being the man he is—he's got to tell *somebody* all about it; and get advice; even if it's bum advice.

When the second woman in the world

went wrong she ran off from her holy sisters and hunted up the first feminine sinner; for sympathy and help. And Dicky Malone knew just as much about the real world—having spent his bachelorhood in not causing his mother a minute's worry—as the average sheltered woman. So he hits the trail in search of a sinner who will understand.

And—say, I hate to spring a joke on myself—but the supposed sinner he hunts up is an earnest young wellder named Raegan. I like to think he was looking for someone else and came across me by accident. Or else maybe he'd heard some of the libelous things those Settlement people said about me the time I took a whim to leave there so sudden. Anyhow, in his "dark hour," as he calls it, he wishes himself on *me!*

We'd seen a bit of each other, him and me, at the Settlement. And down there he used to ask me kind of bashful questions about life in what he labeled "the underworld." I guess a lot of busybodies had given him a wrong idea of me and my performances. But anyhow, we'd got rather chummy in a way down there; though I hadn't seen him since his wedding. His wife, somehow, had never understood me.

Anyhow, that evening as I'm getting ready to come to work, in piles Dicky Malone on me, all pasty-faced and orey-eyed and breathing like a "kicker" that skips. Before I can get my bearings he's blurted out the whole story. At least the mixed-up skeleton of it. And I had no great bother straightening out the bones and putting back the flesh where it belonged. Just a handful of questions did it.

I did what I could for him. I saw it was my time to show him how wrong those Settlement knockers had been, about me. I made believe the confession he sprung was the wonderfulest strange tale I'd ever heard; but that there was quite a swad of hope for him in this world and the next if only he'd buck up and travel straight for the rest of the trip.

Also, in a few real sane words, I showed him that Friend Husband hadn't

a scrap of evidence against him and wouldn't be likely to use that same scrap if he had it. Likewise that a semi-detached wife is a better investment for a husband like the woman's than a divorced wife whose generous gen'l'm'n fr'en's won't do little kindnesses for him any longer. Dicky winced at that part. So, as gentle as I could, I tried to put him wise. And I did.

Before I was done I had painlessly extracted his horrible fear, and I had him splashing around all blissful in a tepid bath of remorse. His relief was something beautiful when he found he wasn't in any danger of disgrace. And it started the conscience ducts to flowing free again, with never a twinge.

"Oh, I've been a beast—a brute beast, Raegan!" he groans, contented-like.

"Aw, cheer up, Mr. Malone!" I soothes him. "It's all over now. You ought to be grateful. You cut your temptation teeth a few years too late. That's all's the matter with you."

I saw he didn't understand and that he wasn't much interested. But I wanted to set him right about himself, so I tried to explain.

"Mr. Malone," I said, "we eat bacon and eggs for breakfast because most of us have learned by experience—our own or some other fellow's—that they're about the safest stomach combination to play at that hour of the morning; and that lobster Newburgh and fizz don't give the best start for a day's work. A man who had never in his life strayed from bacon and eggs couldn't always be expected to know, till he tried, that the lobster and fizz don't go well at eight A.M. He wouldn't have a fuzzy, dark brown memory to keep reminding him and hold him steady to the bacon and egg diet. He'd just be wondering to himself how lobster would taste for breakfast. And some day maybe, when it was slammed down right in front of him, he'd try. And then he'd feel like you're feeling right now. But he wouldn't try again. And no more will you."

"You mean—" he begins.

"That you haven't any more curios-

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ity about lobster and fizz. And you aren't likely to have. You're not the sort that makes a fool of himself twice in the same place. Most of us reach your state at about the age when you were spending all your spare time in not causing mother a minute's worry. Some are strong enough and clean enough to go through life without curiosity. More go through it without being tempted. For, whatever the story books say, that kind of temptation don't generally toss itself against a man—unless he's rich or magnetic or a looker or a fine physical animal. The average man plods through life with no temptations except those he can buy. But," I winds up, smoothing the salve on the cut, "you ain't the average man."

Dicky Malone sighs his endorsement to this. And he gets another rush of conscience to the voice,

"There is only one thing for me to do," he announces, as stern and noble as only a weak man can be: "I must start clean. I must live down my sin. I must confess everything to my wife and throw myself on her divine mercy. Then I'll spend the rest of my life in trying to make myself worthy of—"

"Of the booby hatch or the fool killer's axe?" I puts in, quaint yet insistent. "Because you won't need to. You'll have qualified fine for both."

"I don't quite understand, Raegan," he begins, haughty, "just what you mean by—"

"No?" says I, getting a trifle worked up on my own account. "Well, I'll put it in easy words for you. You're planning to go straight home to your wife and confess, you say?"

"I am. It is the only manly, honorable—"

"It's the only dirty, cowardly thing you can leave undone," I comes back. "Your wife's happy. She trusts you. She thinks you've got Sir Galahad and Anthony Comstock looking like a brace of tenderloin rounders. She's proud of you as her 'blameless king' among men. What death grouch have you got against your poor kid of a wife, anyhow, Mr. Malone, that you want to smash that trust and pride and love of hers and to

make her think she's married to a cur? She is, too, if you confess."

"But reform without confession," he interrupts dizzily, "is not worth—"

"You read that in a book," I comes back. "Look here! You've wronged your wife. And now you're aiming to make that wrong fifty times as rotten by letting her know how badly off she is. If you have harmed her, she doesn't know it. She'll never know it. Unless you tell her. She'll go right on thinking you're the grandest man since Abe Lincoln. Keep her happy. Don't smash her, as that fool confession of yours would smash her. Play straight in future and *keep* her happy."

"But confession is such a relief!" he babbles. "To lay down one's sins at—"

"At the door of a church? Maybe. I'm not saying it isn't. The church is strong enough to stand 'em. But your wife isn't. For the sake of wiping your own slate clean, you want to hang crape over hers. Just to get a feeling of smug forgiveness, you want to wreck her faith. So that *you* can sleep sound, you want to fix it so she'll forget how to sleep at all."

"But if I don't confess," he wails, "how'll I ever have the courage to go on living with her? It will be torture! To know she believes in me and loves me, and that I'm not—"

"Take it as part of your penance," I advised him. "It will hurt a little at first, maybe. But you'll be delighted to see how soon the hurt will ease up. And even if it doesn't, it's better for you to suffer than for her. You'll be paying for a good time. She'd only be paying for having married a selfish jellyfish. Let it go as it lays. She wins. As the wife always does. Though yours seems to have yanked a booby prize."

That was too much even for conscientious Dicky Malone. He remembered all at once that he was a gentleman and I was a mutt. He drew himself up very straight and cold; and said:

"I think you forget yourself, Raegan. I am going home; and, as a brave man should, I am going to tell my wife everything. Even if it breaks her heart. It is my duty."

"Well," I growls, giving up the ship; "you've been off duty quite a spell. Don't let me stop you. At that, the wife is the winner—if she's still fool enough to care for what she's won back."

And off he went, his shoulders square and a pure light of resolve in his big eyes—to spoil the future of a pretty little woman, I figured out at the time, who had never done overmuch hurt to anybody, except maybe when she wouldn't try to understand *me*. Well, she was due to get hers.

How did she take Dicky Malone's heroic confession? Son, that's the queer part of the whole thing. She never heard it.

You see, Dicky had come straight to me from the other woman who had just that evening thrown the scare into him. So he wasn't expected home till late—being detained, as he often was, at the office. And when he got home, four hours ahead of schedule, his chum was there. The chum had kind of taken to calling on Mrs. Malone during Dicky's long absences at the office. And there he was now. And there *she* was.

So it was a stand-off. Dicky Malone and Mrs. Dicky got a mutual divorce. At that, she was the winner, all right—even after she had stopped being a wife and become just a married woman. Mrs.

Dicky married the male co-respondent, and I guess they were happy.

Do you want to know how I know? It's like this: I knew all the time that Mrs. Dicky, during Dicky's love affair, was herself indulging in an extra-nuptial romance. And I knew the fellow, too. That's one of the reasons I tried to keep Dicky from telling her. Dicky, of course, didn't go back to the woman. He was really broken up over his wife's affair. Folks said her unfaithfulness wrecked Dicky's trust in all womankind, and made him later what he got to be. A reformed husband makes the best rake. And—

A patient pianissimo pounding at the street door broke in on the fag end of the recital.

"The wardman got greased two hours ago," grumbled Raegan, shuffling across to the door. "And if he wants more now he's liable to get a hot axe."

He returned in a few minutes; after a whispered colloquy with the unseen visitor.

"Schuster," he explained curtly, "sneaked back. Wants me to go around to his flat and try to square things for him. But it wouldn't do any good. Mrs. Schuster is too much interested in somebody else."

Raegan leaned over the table and winked.

"I ought to know if anybody does."



THEN AND NOW

By Richard Burton

HELEN and Heloise and Joan of France,
Ruth and Griselda, Mary with her tears,
Beautiful, stricken women of Romance,
What are they all but dreams from out the years?

I cannot hold them, hear them, kiss their feet:
But now beside me, close and O so fair,
You come, and I enfold you, find you sweet,
Dazed by the splendor of your eyes and hair!

SONG AGAINST WOMEN

By Willard Huntington Wright

WHY should I sing of women
And the softness of night,
When the dawn is loud with battle
And the day's teeth bite,
And there's a sword to lay my hand to
And a man's fight?

Why should I sing of women? . . .
There's life in the sun,
And red adventure calling
Where the roads run,
And cheery brews at the tavern
When the day's done.

I've sung of a hundred women
In a hundred lands:
But all their love is nothing
But drifting sands.
I'm sick of their tears and kisses
And their pale hands.

I've sung of a hundred women
And their bought lips;—
But out on the clean horizon
I can hear the whips
Of the white waves lashing the bulwarks
Of great, strong ships:

And the trails that run to the Westward
Are shot with fire,
And the winds hurl from the headlands
With ancient ire;
And all my body itches
With an old desire.

So I'll deal no more in women
And the softness of night,
But I'll follow the red adventure
And the wind's flight;
And I'll sing of the sea and of battle
And of men's might.

"MAYBE THIS IS LOVE"

By Barry Benefield

Barry Benefield, it will be remembered, was the author of "Daughters of Joy," a recent SMART SET story which brought forth more intelligent praise than any other story we have issued in years. Mr. Benefield ranks high in modern short story writing, and "Maybe This Is Love," while different from "Daughters of Joy," will make a strong appeal to the better class reader. THE SMART SET issues a story by Mr. Benefield every month, and not to follow his work is to miss some of the most distinctive short story literature of the present day.

In the late summer of 1912, the editor of the Belleport *Blade* and myself, the temporary other half of the office "force," spent a whole day "setting up" a page and more of print headed, "Confession of Zebedee Deakin." Two days later the editor decided, for a reason that will appear further on, not to print the confession. Except for some added punctuation, and some slight editing, for the sake of more immediate clearness, it was as follows.

I ain't never had much truck with women, but I know Mis' Nannie Marion never thought I was goin' to kill her husband, an' she never aimed for me to do it. You got her locked up here in jail, which ain't fair. You done tried me, an' found me guilty, an' said I was to die, which is all right. Next term of court you air goin' to try her, but she never had nothin' to do with the killin', an' she ought to be free.

Please don't you all put no stock in what she says: that she is guilty, an' not me, an' that she ought to die an' me go free. She is as innocent as a lamb, an' if you all could see her little black-haired baby girl Alice playin' an' laughin' acrost yonder in front of her cell you would turn her loose. I got to tell the truth straight out now, because if I don't you all won't believe me, an' so you won't turn Mis' Marion loose. Sometimes a

man can speak a short lie an' go on about his business without nobody findin' it out on him; but if he goes on speakin' a long lie he is shore to git mixed up an' you can tell it on him. An' so this is the truth what I am goin' to write, showin' that Mis' Nannie Marion never had nothin' to do with the killin'.

An' I got to do it right away, too. I ain't due to die for two weeks yet, but I knowed what them men wanted when they come up here last night tryin' to bust in the jail door. They wanted to lynch me. If I got to go, it don't make no difference to me how I die, nor when; but I got to hurry up, less'n them men git me before I can show that Mis' Marion never had nothin' to do with the killin'.

I am twenty-five years ole, which is five more than her. She ain't nothin' but a child nohow. I was born up yonder in Northern Arkansaw, in the Ozark Mountings; an' a year ago I jest got tired scratchin' the side of them hills, an' restless, too; so I struck out for a change. I drifted on down through Arkansaw an' acrost the line of Louisiana, an' soon I come to Belleport. I heard they wanted hands nine miles out of town, in the oak flats, by Batouche Bayou, to make railroad crossties. So I went out there.

The first camp I come to was Mr. Will Hutchinson's. He give me a job at one end of a crosscut saw to cut down trees;

but purty soon I was put to trimmin' ties, which I did right well at.

There is thirty or forty men at Hutchinson's camp, which is near the bayou. A few of the married men have shacks, an' them that ain't married board around. Jim Marion had a three-room shack he lived in with his wife an' baby Alice. He wasn't a shore-'nough tie-man; he had three wagins an' hauled ties five miles south to Jamison's Switch on the Katy Railroad. He drove one wagin hisself an' looked after two niggers drivin' the other teams.

Well, Jim Marion heard I was lookin' for board, an' said come right on in an' use the spare room at his house. It was jest as easy for Nannie to cook for four as for three, he said. So I went to board at that house.

The Prosecutin' Attorney at my trial tried to make out like somethin' was between me an' Mis' Marion from the start. It air a bald-faced lie. That summer she never paid no more attention to me than she did to Minnie, the little black fice dog; she jest set out vittals for us both.

An' what's more—an' this is the hardest thing I got to write, an' I hope Nannie don't never see it—I got in a fight that summer for sayin' she wasn't much to look at. It was July, and hot as Ole Nick's place; an' one day in the middle of the afternoon a gang of seven or eight of us workin' on a big tree stopped to set down an' blow a while. The other men got to talkin' about the women in the camp, an' Baxter Wylie said Jim Marion's wife, Nannie, was right good-lookin'. I said: "Shucks; she ain't nothin' but a onery little nubbin of a woman."

I don't know how come I to say it onless it was jest out of contrary argyment. I done been there two months then, an' I never thought about her one way or another. But shorely I knowed right that minute I was sayin' a lie.

She is little, about up to my shoulder, but women ought to be little. Stars above, there is enough big lummockes of men around, an' to spare. An' she comes out the longer you look at her, like a fish down deep in the clear water

that you cain't hardly see when you first look at it. She is quiet an' still an' white, but you kind of feel that ain't because the blood is lazy in her; she is like somethin' about to break loose.

An' she is all curves—not like me, all long lines an' sharp corners. I reckon there ain't a sharp corner in her nowheres. Her gray eyes is round, her head is round; an' when you jest stand off an' look at her it is mighty good to do—like seein' the moon or a lake or a purty round peach all by itself away out at the end of a limb.

There ain't nothin' to her nowheres that's rough or raw or loud. Her hair ain't nigger black, nor it ain't whitey-colored; it's kind of blue, like some chickins an' dogs is. Her voice is a little bittie one, like her mouth; an' it's soft an' thick an' clingin', same as the green velvet inside my pipe case; an' you git to listenin' for it after you done been hearin' it a while. It's a crazy thing to say, but sometimes I felt like it was nuzzlin' into my hand or rubbin' agin my cheek.

I reckon I ought to say them things about her now because I once said that terribul thing about her bein' nothin' but a onery little nubbin of a woman. Two days after us men done that talkin' out there settin' on that tree, Baxter Wylie told me Connie Harper had let on to Mis' Marion what I said. I never asked her one way or another—I couldn't bear to—but I went right straight an' whooped Connie good; an' he went away from there, to Adams's camp, three miles further east, along the bayou.

But I was sorry afterward I done it, because I seen right away that Baxter was wrong. If Mis' Marion had have heard of what I said she would have been mean to me, but she wasn't; it seemed like she commenced to treat me a little better an' a little more better every day than she done the fice dog, which was because she got to know me better, I reckon, an' felt sorry for me, bein' a pore, big ole bachelord.

It was not long before she was goin' out of her way to do little things for me. Her voice was never peevish with me no

more. She got to treatin' me careful an' kind an' sweet, like I was a helpless baby. So I knowed Connie nor nobody could have told her that what I said that day jest for the sake of contrary argyment, about her not bein' nothin' but a onery little nubbin of a woman.

As I wrote up yonder above, I ain't never had much truck with women; an' after that, thinkin' of what I said to the men that day, I felt terribul stiff an' uncomfortable when she was around. I reckon she must have noticed it, because she seemed to study how to make me feel easier. Sometimes at night after that she would tell Jim to take the baby in an' put her to bed. Then, a good many times, she would say to me: "An' you, Zeb, stay right here an' help me dry them dishes."

She wanted to see that I did the dishes right, I reckon, an' yit she didn't want to hurt my feelin's by lettin' on she had to watch me; so she would keep lookin' round at me out the corners of her eyes. It made me feel kind of funny, an' good, too; an' I knowed she was doin' it for my sake. Then agin she would sometimes take a dish out of my hand to show me how to do it right, an' to keep from hurtin' my feelin's she would slap my hands an' laugh low an' gentle, jest to let on that it wasn't no hell of a matter if I did make a mistake now an' then. Them little things makes you feel easy an' at home.

In November—I remember it was gittin' cool—Jim said one Sat'dy night that we all ought to go over to a candy matchin' at Jake Kincaid's farm, four miles south, on kind of high ground, near the railroad. He hitched up a wagin an' drove it around in front of the shack, where we was waitin'.

He told me to help in Mis' Marion an' the baby whilst he tied better than it was one of the hamestrings on the mules' collars. I got up in the wagin, an' took in Alice an' set her on the front seat. Mis' Marion stepped up on the hub of the wheel; I reached down my hand an' pulled her in. She had to hold hard to my hand to stiddy herself, but the pressin' of it agin mine kind of made me crazy, an' I couldn't turn it loose for a long time.

At the candy matchin' any man that paid a dime could have his pardner stick her hand through a hole in the top of a pasteboard box an' pull out a little piece of stick candy. Then he put in his hand an' pulled out a piece. If they was the same len'th he had a right to kiss her. Ole Jake Kincaid said the money was aimed for Mt. Cypress Chapel, to send away to help save the souls of Feejee cannonballs away off yonder somewhere; an' a right good many of the pieces of candy was the same len'th. I reckon it's weected to say it, but we never cared a durn about no cannonball's soul.

Well, the candy was all drawed out of the box in no time; which I spent a dollar an' got eight pieces that matched with pardners'. But I never kissed none of them, because when I started to I 'lowed I seen somethin' in Mis' Marion's eyes sayin' not to. Which shows what a good woman she was from the start. Two of my matches was with her, but she only kind of laughed, an' lifted an' pulled back her top lip an' her nose, same as she was smellin' somethin' bad. Ever'body was lookin' on, which made me feel like nothin' at all.

I reckon I was already done gone crazy. All the way drivin' back home, settin' on the back seat lookin' at her there in front with Alice an' Jim, I kept thinkin' about how her hand felt in mine—hot an' soft an' damp, pressin' hard agin my flesh. Crossin' Crawfish Creek, Jim got out to set three or four ole steel traps he had there for coons. I drove on up to the house, which was about two hundred yards away. There wasn't no fence around the shack, so I drove right up to the steps.

I got out an' lifted down Alice an' set her on the gal'ry. In helpin' down Mis' Marion her foot slipped on the hub or somethin', an' she fell agin me, an' I had to hold her up. I felt her two breasts agin me, an' I pulled her harder an' harder agin me, an' kissed her I don't know how many times. She couldn't help it. I told her she owed me two by rights. It was all a accident at first, then I helt her so close she couldn't git away. After a while she

whispered, "Be good, Zeb," so I turned her loose, an' went on an' put up the team, an' went to bed.

Well, that night was the startin' of it, an' anybody can see it wasn't none of Mis' Marion's fault. It was all mine, an' partly accident, too, I reckon. That night in bed I was like a man crazy, or sick, or somethin'. It was cool enough to sleep inside—leastways, to try to, but I never slept a wink. Fevers spread all over me an' went away an' come an' come agin. My heart felt like it was bustin' out of me; an' I run my hand down over my chist a hundred times expectin' to find a big lump on it where my heart was swellin'. But there wasn't nothin' there, only my ribs. I don't know if my heart was beatin' fast or not. I think it was, though.

It takes mighty cold weather to stop the crickets an' katydids from fiddlin' at night, an' they was goin' it by the millions outside. They never bothered me before, but that night it looked like they would break the insides of my ears. Maybe I was nervous. I jest lay there all night swellin', an' gittin' hot, an' tremblin', an' wishin' to God the day would come so as I could see an' hear Mis' Marion agin.

At breakfas' I set lookin' down at my plate. I was scared to meet her eyes. Most evr'body, I reckon, don't talk much at breakfas', bein' kind of sleepy; an' I never was much of a talker nohow. So it wasn't strange, me bein' quiet. After a while I raised my eyes to hers, but her look was straight an' clear an' stiddy as it ever was, which shows what a good an' innocent woman she was. I was the mean an' guilty one, an' could not help showin' it.

An' the next week, on Tuesday an' Wednesday, I had the chills which them flat lands give you, so I stayed in bed an' took ague killer. Four or five times a day she would come in to straighten an' smooth the bed covers, an' when I felt her spread-out arms runnin' up over my body it seemed to my guilty mind like she was huggin' me, an' I got so hot I couldn't feel no chill at all.

When I got up I swore I was goin' to try mighty hard to be good the same as

she was, but it was like a wagin' slidin' down a steep hill with no breechin' on the mules to hold back by. I jest naturally didn't have the stren'th in me to hold me back; every minute of the day, an' night, too, when I was awake, which was a lot, I spent figgerin' out how to see her a little more, an' hear her, an' touch her somehow. Sometimes she would git through with washin' the dishes long before I finished the dryin'. Then she would take one end of the towel, me usin' the other end, an' help me. Jest feelin' her connected to me by a ole washed-out flour sack made me kind of drunk. At the table when she passed me anything I would manage somehow to touch her fingers.

She was so innocent, though, she never noticed how bad I was gittin' to be. If she had have noticed it she would not have been in such a good humor as she was all the time; she would have been mad. It seemed like she was happier than she had ever been since I knowned the family, an' went singin' all the time around the shack. Her favorite tune was, "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marbul Halls."

An' she was specially good to Jim, kissin' him whilst I was there to see, jest as if she wanted to show me what a wife she was, an' that nobody but her husband stood anywhere with her. It wasn't none of my business, but seein' her kiss him jest once after supper would keep me awake all night. I had let myself git that far along.

But she was good an' kind to me as I deserved; an' spent a lot of time doin' little things to make me feel easy an' at home. When I would have one of them bad nights, an' git up with my eyes all bloodshot an' hands tremblin', she would always notice it; an' in the kitchin when we was by ourselves she would whisper very sympathetic: "Pore Zeb! I amafeared these flat lands ain't good for yore health." Then she would laugh a little, which was to make me feel cheerful, I guess, but it wasn't no easy thing to be cheerful then.

Yes, I had done got so far along that I was out of my mind, I reckon, because I started in projectin' with a crazy thought

in my head. Four or five times I done heard Jim's two nigger drivers talkin' about old Minervy Hamer over on Kincaid's place bein' a hoodoo woman. So I went over there one dark night to her cabin to ask for a hoodoo bag. She shore looked like a witch, with four or five long an' twistin' white hairs on her chin an' two little bittie black eyes burnin' in her yaller wrinkled face like live coals.

"Agin a man or for a woman?" she ask me.

"For a woman," I said.

So I give her four bits for a little bag about half the size of a nickel tobacco sack, which she said to hide near where the body wanted spent a lot of time. Then I hid the hoodoo bag in Mis' Marion's kitchin.

I reckon the spell was workin' agin the pore woman all the time, but I never noticed no change for a good while, until after Christmas, in January. Until the change come she was good an' kind to me all right, but she was a whole lot nicer to her husband than I ever noticed before. I wished to God a hundred times a day that Jim would fall off his wagin in the bayou, or his kickin' little black mule Kit would kick him in the head, or somethin'.

In the fore part of January, when the change come all at once, I was settin' in my room before the fire a right smart while after supper by myself. One of Jim's wagins had broke down on the road two miles from camp, an' he was out on the road 'tendin' to it. I heard a knock at my door, an' I said, "Come in." I thought it was Charlie Jenkins, who nearly always put me to sleep when he talked to me at night, so I never looked around.

Then I heard the swishin' sound of her dress, an' I jumped up. "The baby is in her crib an' asleep," she said, "an' I am lonesome." There wasn't but one chair in my room, which she would not take, standin' there before the fire leanin' her head agin the shelf above the hearth. So I stood up by her, kickin' the logs ever' now an' then to make them burn up to light the dark room.

"You cain't hear the crickets an'

katydids no more now, can you?" she ask, not raisin' her head.

"No," I said; "it's too cold for them outside now."

Then neither of us said nothin' for a long time. The wind was blowin' around the house, an' the fire cracked an' spit out rainim' sparks like it do when bad weather is shorely comin'. I stood there lookin' at the back of her round neck, so soft an' white, an' so close to me, an' thinkin' all the time about the hoodoo bag in the kitchin. All at once Nannie give a little whimper, an' turned an' throwed her arms up around my neck, an' pulled herself hard agin me, an' heft up her face with her eyes half closed. "I been meant to you, Zeb," she said, "but you ain't goin' to hold it agin me, air you?"

That was about eight o'clock, I reckon, because we kept lookin' up at the clock an' wishin' to God Jim would stay away a while longer. The spell made pore Nannie bad as me, which I never thought nobody could be. When we heard Jim down at the stable with the wagin after midnight I had to pick her up an' carry her into the room across the hall. Then I had to unlock her arms from around my neck, which I shorely had to do.

I never knewed till that night what it is to have a woman meet you more than halfway with her kiss. The Sheriff may hang me high as Haman, but them four hours is worth it all—an' hell, too. But the fault was all mine; Nannie couldn't help herself. I know she tried, but the spell was on her.

After that it looked like she couldn't do enough for me. I reckon she studied every day how to do somethin' more to please me. She cooked all the things I had a special relish for, payin' no regards no more to whether Jim liked them or not. She worked purty red flowers on my piller cases. The next time she went to town she got some perfumery water an' sprinkled it on my piller every night to make it smell sweet.

I don't know if it is love the matter with me, but I reckon maybe it is. But hers was only a spell put on her by me cheatin'. I felt so onery about cheatin' agin her that I swore mighty

nigh every day to burn up the hoodoo bag; an' three or four times I did manage to walk to the corner where it was hid in a crack, but it wasn't no use: I couldn't make my hand touch it; I couldn't bear to break the spell an' lose her.

As I wrote up yonder above jest now, I don't know if it was love the matter with me, yit somethin' was changin' me all inside in regards to everything outside. I never before noticed about things bein' what they call beautiful. Ever'thing an' ever'body got to lookin' beautiful to me. An' I was kind an' tender an' lovin' to ever'thing, same as if I was a yearnin' mother to ever'thing ever'where what you can see, or hear, or feel.

I don't know why people don't natchally love mules, but they don't. Well, I got so I wanted to smooth an' pat the necks of all the mules that come 'nigh me, an' talk sweet to them, like I wanted to try to make up to them for all the pettin' they done missed.

One night, I remember, I started to lay a oak log on my fire, when I seen a little white wood louse run out from under the bark. I eased the log down low to the floor an' flipped him off gentle with my fingernail. "Go on away, you pore little thing," I said; "there ain't no use in you burnin' up to keep me warm." I never done nothin' like that before.

All except Jim—I hated him. He was a thin, brown man, but tall an' bony an' strong; an' I got so I couldn't bear to even look at him. I wished to God all day, all night, that he would git sick an' die, or fall in the bayou, or anything, jest to git out of my way.

One Friday night I was over at Charlie Jenkins's shack playin' casino with four or five of the men. I went out on the back gal'ry to git a drink of water, an' passin' I heard the women talkin' in the room acrost the hall. Somebody—I 'lowed it was Mis' Jenkins herself—said Nannie Marion was dressin' up a lot since she got a new boarder. Then they all laughed kind of funny, same as if to say they could tell a lot more if they wasn't above such things. An' I went on back to play cards; but I

didn't stay long—I got up an' went home.

I never slept a wink that night for thinkin' how I had done hurt that pore little woman acrost the hall from me, an' her so good an' kind an' innocent. The next mornin' she went off to town in a wagin with a passel of women. Three of them was in the crowd at Charlie Jenkins's the night before, but they was nice to her like they never said a bad word about her.

Jim an' me fried us a dinner, an' that afternoon I got my money from Mr. Hutchinson, quit my job, told Jim I was gittin' restless for a change an' walked away through the woods, along the bayou to Adams's camp. I got a job over there easy enough, an' found board where there was three or four other men, at Mis' Little Whipple's house.

But over there nobody an' nothin' looked good to me. I hated ever'body an' ever'thing. Sunday night an' then agin Monday night I went out in the woods an' jest stood agin a tree lookin' over west where Nannie was, four miles away. But it was better'n sleep to me.

Tuesday night I slipped back to Hutchinson's camp, an' hid in the woods so as I could see the very house she was in. Along late I seen a light go into my room. I thought a new boarder was there, an' I was crazy mad. I creped up close an' looked through a chink in the wall. I seen her, in a long white nightgown down to her toes, with her hair all down her back, standin' with a lamp in her hand by my bed, lookin' down at it. Then all at once she stooped over an' kissed my piller, an' tiptoed out.

Then I went on away through the woods, an' somehow I couldn't help tiptoein' same as she did. It seemed like I never would want to go to sleep agin. I got on a fallen tree out over the bayou an' edged my way to the end of it. I set there till nearly daybreak jest lookin' down at the little bittie silver-side minners flippin' their shiny bodies out of the still water. There was hundreds of millions of them, I reckon, but I felt like I wanted to git down there in

the bayou an' pet every single one of them.

Perty soon I seen the round white moon go runnin' an' dancin' along behind a big ole cobweb of thin gray clouds, like it was havin' a mighty good time up there an' wanted to play with somebody.

"Go on, moon," I said, kind of swelled up—"go on about your business. You ain't big enough for me to play with."

But after a while I did drag myself on home.

The next week Nannie come over to Adams's camp to visit Mis' Whipple an' have dinner. I seen her there at noon when I went to eat. In the afternoon I said to the men I was workin' with that I was sick with a chill an' had to go lay down. I sneaked off in the woods, made a circle an' come out on the short cut path leadin' from Adams's to Hutchinson's camp.

About three o'clock she come scootin' down the path, her starchy underclothes rattlin' nice an' fresh, like they always done lately. She made out like she didn't see me standin' there within two feet of her, an' went on by. I followed her a quarter of a mile, talkin' to her all the time, but she never answered me once. Then all of a sudden she turned around an' said, "I despise you," an' throwed herself on me an' run her arms up around my neck.

I set out there in the woods a hour, I reckon, on a ole tree, holdin' her in the holler of my lap. Sometimes she was cryin' because, she said, I went away an' never told her good-bye; an' sometimes she was kissin' my lips an' my hair an' my big ole tough hands. One minute I was sorry I had used a hoodoo bag to make her so crazy, but most of the time I was glad.

All of a sudden she jumped up an' run down the path. I stood a while watchin' her go away from me, an' then I turned an' started back to Adams's camp. When I looked around once she had done stopped still an' was watchin' me. I reckon she was afeared I would follow her an' make trouble.

Two or three days after that Mr. Adams come out to where I was trimmin'

a tie. "I thought you was a good hand," he said, "but it looks like you spend too damn much time leanin' on the handle of that there adze, gazin' out through the trees at nothin', at nothin' at all, so far as anybody else can see. You been draggin' around here like a ole hen with the dead lice droppin' off her."

I told him to go to hell an' give me my time quick; which he did. I made out like I was mad, but I was so happy I could have hugged that peevish little man, because he was givin' me a excuse to go back to Hutchinson's camp; which I fairly run through the woods to do. I got my ole job from Mr. Hutchinson easy enough, but my ole boardin' place wasn't so easy. Jim wasn't home when I went in, yit Nannie said shore, come right on up; but at the table that night I seen Jim wasn't glad about it.

I reckon he had done been suspicionin' something, because he seemed to study how to never let Nannie an' me be together without him there, too. After supper he would lay the baby on the bed dressed an' hurry back in the kitchin; he would say he wanted to help out with the dishes, too. If anything got the matter with the wagins out on the road late he would leave it to the niggers to 'tend to an' rush on home.

On Sundays he stuck around the house all day keepin' right at Nannie's heels. Sometimes at night he would make out like he was goin' down to the stable or over to Crawfish Creek to set the traps; then he would bust in on us all of a sudden before he could have got halfways there, much less there an' back. But he never seen nothin'; Nannie could always tell when he was puttin' on.

Maybe it was him gittin' more an' more between us that made us more crazy, but somethin' did. Before that I never could bear to look square at the idea of jest natchally takin' his wife away from him altogether, an' by a cheatin' spell at that. It always seemed to me that she was his, like his money or his wagins or his mules; an' I felt that it was a meaner trick than even I could do to thieve her away from him with a witch's trick. Now I begun to scheme to do it. But Nannie never knew

what was in my mind, though; I never said a word about it to her.

I 'lowed I would make for Shreveport when the time come. I done heard her say a lot of times she would like to live there, an' that a strong man could easy make a livin' there on public work if he never got nothin' better—on streets an' the police an' things.

Purty soon I bought me two new shirts, a pair of yaller shoes an' a big valise. It was big enough to hold all the things I had, which wasn't many, an' a whole lot more than Nannie might want to take. Women jest natchally wear more of more kinds of things than a man. She seen them things I bought, an' she ask me why I bought such a whalin' big valise, but I made out like I done it because I got it cheap as a littler one. I got Mr. Hutchinson to pay me by the tie, as he done some of the men, an' not by the day; an' lit in to git as much money as I could.

But it was hard to work even as much as I done at first. My appetite was gone all to pieces; I couldn't eat hardly anything, though Nannie worried herself tryin' to tempt my appetite, because, she said, I mustn't git down. In the mornin's when I would start out my legs was weak as a kitten's. Yit I did manage to make more money by goin' earlier to the trees an' stayin' later.

April come on, with the spring weather. The air got hot an' thick an' sweet, but it was not good for workin'; an' I needed more money. Ever'thing ever'where was jest natchally too purty for any use—the white dogwood blossoms, the purple vi'lets, the shiny snakes with their new skins; which it took too much good time away from work lookin' at them all, or smellin' them, or jest settin' still an' pantin' with ever'thing all around me.

I don't know if it was the spring weather or what, but Jim got crazy now hisself; an' then there was three crazy folks in that shack. He was always after his wife, goin' on like a boy courtin'; an' she was always gittin' away from him an' tellin' him not to be a fool. So they quarreled a good deal. A lot of times after I was in bed

I would git up an' stand out in the hall by their door listenin' to them fussin'. I knowed if he hit her or anything I would have to go in an' kill him. Maybe he felt I was out there; he never done nothin' but talk an' argy.

May come on, an' the air got thicker an' hotter an' sweeter, which was harder for work, but I was ready. I had forty dollars ahead. I never said a word to Nannie, though. I never knowed if when I said "Come," she would come, askin' no questions; but I wished to God a hundred times a day the spell would be strong enough for even that. Anyway, things had done come to the pass where I had to have all of her or none.

Well, the thing happened on the second Sunday in May, as ever'body knows now, I reckon. I had done made ready to git out on the next day, Monday, an' try to take Nannie with me, though she never knowed a word about it. All that Sunday mornin' Jim was cuttin' up around Nannie fit to make a body sick, an' she told him so. But she couldn't settle him by bein' rough, so she started in pleadin' with him. She kept cryin' out: "Oh, Jim, please let me alone; I got to git dinner, which I Cain't do with you hangin' around me so I Cain't take a step."

Jim nearly talked his head off at dinner, hittin' at me all the time. He would ask me why I didn't go off somewhere an' git me a nice girl an' marry, like he done. Then he would wink at his wife an' ask her if marryin' wasn't a fine thing. When she would git up to take some hot biscuits out the stove an' pass to us he would catch her, pull her head down an' kiss her. She never laughed nor smiled nor nothin'; she jest went around silent, in a way she had, with her nose an' top lip lifted an' pulled back, like she was tryin' mighty hard not to smell somethin' bad.

After dinner we went into Jim's room, because Nannie told us she didn't want nobody helpin' her with the dishes an' to git out quick. Jim an' me set there smokin'. He kept askin' me if I wasn't goin' out in the woods walkin', like I mostly did on Sunday afternoons. He

was anxious for me to go. Nannie heard him from the kitchin.

"Zeb better stay at home an' rest," she called out, "stead of walkin' his legs off. He needs all his stren'th at his work, an' he needs all the money he can make an' scrape."

I wondered how come her to know I been savin' money, an' I 'lowed she couldn't; so it was jest accident her sayin' that.

After a while Nannie come in from the kitchin an' set down, with Alice in her lap. The baby was over two years ole, an' plenty able to be by herself in her own little red rockin' chair. Jim kept tellin' Nannie to put her down, but she wouldn't do it. They fussed a whole lot about that, which I never put my mouth into at all.

After a while Jim stood up by Nannie an' said, "Ain't my wife purty, Zeb?" whilst he lifted up from over her temples that hair as fine as fog layin' on the bayou at daybreak. He kept on talkin' about her gray eyes, an' her voice, an' her little feet, an' her round arm with no whitey-colored whiskers on it like some women have, an' her bust, an' her figger; an' every time he pointed out somethin' he would say, "I shore am proud of my wife," layin' his voice heavy on "my."

I got up an' went to my room, an' then out walkin'. I couldn't stand it no longer in there. I knowed if he said "my wife" three more times I would have to kill him, or git killed. As I walked down the steps he come to the door an' said: "My wife says to be back in time, Zeb, or you won't git any supper." I heard Nannie call out that she never said no such a thing, but I run on out in the woods.

I stumbled through bushes an' briers an' boggy places till I was a sight to behold. I kept thinkin' about Jim an' Nannie back there at the house. I 'lowed to myself a hundred times that I was a double-barreled fool for waitin' so long before tryin' to take her; but after a while I got kind of quiet. I reckoned I could shorely make out for twelve more hours. An' the next day I would do my do, or die, or git out.

I stayed out late because I didn't want to eat with Jim. When I got back it was after dark. Nannie set me out some cold chickin' an' made me a pct of hot coffee. Then she set down with me an' asked me if I had a pleasant walk. Which shows how good an' innocent she was. If she hadn't have been she would have known that I didn't have no pleasant walk.

She was eatin' on right well herself when Jim come back from the stable. He set down, too. "I thought you wasn't hungry," he said to her. "I wasn't then," she kind of snapped back at him. "I am now."

After supper we all went in Jim's room agin. Purty soon Nannie come in an' put Alice to sleep in the crib over in the corner by the door alongside of the big bed. Then she set down between us. Jim's room had the only winder in the house, but it was pitch dark outside, an' wet, like it was aimin' to rain; an' so Jim lit the lamp an' set it on the shelf above the fireplace.

None of us said much. Jim had a new kind of mad fit on. All day he was talkin' mad; now he had a sullin' mad. I didn't feel like startin' no talk. Nannie set there between us, rockin' an' rockin', to an' fro, in her chair, now an' then lookin' from one to the other of us an' laughin' a little—because we was like two big sticks, I reckon. Because nobody said nothin', I kept listenin' to the millions an' millions of katydids an' crickets outside fiddlin' an' fiddlin' on their same ole sad songs like they never would git tired, an' the tree frogs callin' an' callin' for rain.

Along about ten o'clock Jim ask me if I wasn't sleepy, but I told him no. I laid out to keep them up an' dressed long as I could. I never minded what he might think, because the next day I aimed to git out of there an' make for Shreveport. So I smoked on.

Along about eleven o'clock Jim said to Nannie: "Well, we air sleepy, anyhow, ain't we, dear?" Then he reached over an' caught hold of her arm. She stood up quick because he hurt her, an' he pulled her so she stood between his knees. Then he put his arms around

her waist, but she braced her hands against his shoulders; so either her arms was bound to give in, or her waist, when he put his stren'th on.

"Please don't, Jim," she begged him. "You're hurtin' me."

He put on a little more stren'th. Then she started tryin' to wiggle loose. He jest laughed.

"I want to show Zeb how a wife can kiss her husband when she tries hard to do a good job," he said. "Come on, now; it does ole bachelors good to see things like that."

I seen her arms tremblin'; her face got red an' then white, an' she begged an' begged him: "Oh, Jim, Jim, please don't; Zeb is goin' in to sleep in a minute."

Then all at once he put on all his stren'th, her arms give in, and she fell agin him like a wet rag, her head hangin' over his shoulder, an' cryin' like she was hurt. He reached up his hand to pull her head down an' around to his face, an' soon as she felt one of his arms from around her she jumped up free an' run over in the corner behind me, cryin' so hard it seemed like she would choke.

I stood up, an' Jim jumped up. I couldn't hardly keep away from her; I could hear her cryin' an' cryin' back there behind me.

"You let her alone," I said. I did manage to hold my voice down.

Then he busted loose. I knew it was comin'.

"You git out of this room," he said, "an' out of this house, an' that right now!" His voice sounded like a snake hissin'. "You been here too long now, you damned thief!"

"Well, you let her alone," was all I could think to say.

"In the name of God," he said, "whose is she? Ain't she mine?"

"No, Jim," I said. "She is mine."

His brown face went all at once kind of greeny in color. He couldn't hardly speak above a whisper, he was so mad; an' the skin of his greasy forehead was all gathered in a shiny bunch between his shaggy black eyebrows.

"Whose air you, Nannie?" he called,

out over my shoulder to her. "Mine or his'n?"

I never heard nothin'.

"You got to decide now," Jim said.

I couldn't take my eyes off him. I seen him leanin' forward with his black eyes bulgin' out, an' his hands held out kind of like claws. He was waitin'. It seemed to me a year passed before I could hear anything except me an' him an' her breathin', an' them crickets an' katydids outside fiddlin' on an' on jest like nothin' was happenin'.

Then I heard a board of the floor creak a little bit, but I couldn't make out her steppin' behind me nor the starchy sound of her Sunday clothes. It seemed to me I was losin' her somehow, an' that I ought to turn an' look at her, an' hold out my hands to her; but I could not take my eyes off Jim. I seen plain he aimed to kill somebody, an' it might be her, too, after he done got me, if I let him git me.

I heard another board creak behind me. I felt she was nigh me. I thought she was goin' by me. Then I felt her arm slippin' slow an' gentle an' close around my waist. An' Jim jumped for my throat.

I cain't remember all that happened then. It seemed like all the hot blood in me was steamin' up into my head, an' I got blind for a minute. Then I could see agin, an' my muscles seemed on a sudden like they could tear up a hundred big oak trees an' throw them clear across the bayou.

In the end I had him down on the red stones in front of the fireplace, an' had the poker in my hand. He was still, an' his face was bloody, which was runnin' off the ends of his long black mustache. I seen it dripplin' an' dripplin', an' then the drops come so close together they made a little stream from both sides. Nannie was standin' over in the far corner when I looked up from Jim—over by the door she was, holdin' her hands close agin her ears but starin' hard at me with her eyes.

As soon as I stood up she run an' throwed herself down on Jim's body, whimperin' like somethin' hurt. Then she set up an' begun rubbin' one of

his hands between hers, an' rockin' an' rockin' herself back an' forth, cryin' an' beggin': "Jim, Jim, come back! Oh, Jim, say you ain't dead!"

I stood there lookin' down at her; I didn't know what to make of her at all. Ever' now an' then she would lean over an' kiss his hand. After a while she said to me, without lookin' up: "You go on away. I hate you! Who told you I was youn'?"

So I went in my room an' set down in the dark. Once or twice I thought about runnin' away through the woods. I figgered I could easy git away with a few hours' start. I knowed the woods an' could have lived in them a week or two without goin' near any town.

But after what Nannie said, that she hated me, I didn't care about tryin' to run away. Nothin' made no difference at all to me no more. So I jest set there in the dark waitin' for the mornin' to come to give myself up.

I reckon I was in the room about an hour. Ever'thing inside the house an' out in the camp was still, only them crickets an' katydids fiddlin' on same as nothin' at all had done happened; but once or twice I did hear Nannie whimperin' in the room across the hall where Jim was. Along about twelve o'clock, I reckon it was, I heard a step in the hall; then a light come into the door behind me. I 'lowed it was her, but I didn't know for sure; an' I never turned, because I didn't want to hear her say agin she hated me; an' if it was Jim on his feet an' lookin' for me I didn't care if he killed me.

But it was Nannie. I heard clothes behind me, close. She come on round in front, set the lamp on the shelf above the fireplace an' stood before me; I seen her shoes—I was scared to raise my eyes from the floor. I would ruther have been Jim in there on the red stones than to hear her say agin she hated me. After a while she pushed herself kind of gentle between my knees, slipped her arms close around my neck an' got her head down under mine so as she could kiss me.

"I am ready, Zeb," she said after that. She stepped back a foot or two an'

picked up somethin' from the floor. "See, Zeb: I got a good dress on; an' here in this bun'el I got ever'thing I want from here. The bun'el will fit right into the empty side of your new valise. I am ready, Zeb. Come on."

"Come on where?" I ask her.

"Anywhere you say, Zeb. I am ready. Come on."

In ten minutes we was out on the black road comin' fast as we could to Belleport. But we had to go kind of slow because we had the baby. An' we missed the daybreak train to Shreveport, which we done aimed to catch. An' they caught us before the ten o'clock train come in!

So this is my confession. There is some things in it I wish to God I didn't have to tell, but I knowed if I did not tell the truth straight out I would mix up things an' hurt pore Nannie's chances. Anybody can see that from start to finish she was sweet an' innocent as a lamb, except when I put a hoodoo spell on her. An' shorely the law ain't goin' to hold her for what I done.

I heard her an' the Prosecutin' Attorney talkin' acrost there in her cell yesterday. As soon as he come in she commenced cryin' an' runnin' on like somethin' wild, sayin' she ought to be killed for not speakin' sooner, that she sent for him to let ever'body know she was the guilty one, that she started it all because she was a prideful little huzzy, that she was the cause of ever'thing, an' she ought to die an' me go free; an' a whole lot more such crazy truck, bemeanin' herself terribul with ever' word.

I got so mad I tried to tear down the cell door to put my hand over her mouth to stop her sayin' things agin her pore little innocent self, but of course I couldn't. So I started in yellin' loud as I could to drown her voice. Then the Prosecutor took her downstairs to the jail office.

Pore Nannie is jest crazy, that's all, an' is talkin' crazy talk. Don't nobody believe her, please. The law won't let a man in his senses kill hisself if it can help it. Is it now goin' to let a pore

little woman out of her senses do it, an' help her on to do it?

At my trial I wouldn't say nothin' one way or the other because I was afear'd I might hurt her somehow. An' she wouldn't say nothin', either, for fear, I reckon, that she might hurt me. But now I been tellin' the truth so as ever'-body can see she is out of her head, an' why she is so.

Could anybody but a crazy person cry over her husband, an' pat his hand, an' cry lovin'ly over him one minute, then run off with the man that killed him the next? It jest ain't natchally possible less'n the person is out their mind. That is what pore Nannie is, which I made her so with a spell. An' that is why I been tellin' the straight truth, seein' she ain't aimin' to say nothin' for herself, but all agin herself, an' all because I cheated for myself agin her with a witch's spell. The law ain't goin' to kill her now that it

knows the truth, which it will know when ever'body reads this in the *Blade*.

And the law didn't kill her. The next night, while she screamed down at them from her window, some citizens lynched Zebedee Deakin in the jail's back yard. That was at three A.M. At six, when the jail cook brought up breakfast, she found the little woman's body hanging from the cell door by a rope made from a torn-up petticoat. The baby lay on the bed, wide awake, laughing as it tried to catch a big green fly that buzzed about its face. After that the editor of the *Weekly Blade* thought it good policy to drop the whole case, lynching, suicide, confession and all.

When, several months afterward, I drifted on westward, I took the copy of the confession with me. I have always felt that Zeb was entitled to his say.



SONG

By K. B. Boynton

WHY should the hazy twilight fill me
With strange, forgotten lands?
Why should the pale mist ever still me
With unseen hands?

Why should the even hour lend me
A soul chart all unfurled?
Why should its silver stillness send me
Beyond this world?

Ah, often have I vainly pondered
Why twilights charm me so.
Perhaps in them my soul has wandered
Ages ago!



IT is more important for an actor to have good teeth than to have good sense.

THE HAUNTED RESTAURANT

By Richard Le Gallienne

Richard Le Gallienne needs no introduction to SMART SET readers. For many years his best work has been appearing in these pages. The present sketch, "The Haunted Restaurant," contains all the qualities which have made his name an important one in modern literature. It has both an esthetic and a human appeal, and is flavored with reminiscent romance which never once spills over into the sentimental. It is in the delightful vein of "Little Dinners with the Sphinx."

WERE one to tell the proprietors of the very prosperous and flamboyant restaurant of which I am thinking that it is haunted—yea, that ghosts sit at its well appointed tables, and lost voices laugh and wail and sing low to themselves through its halls—they would probably take one for a lunatic—a servant of the moon.

Certainly, to all appearance, few places would seem less to suggest the word "haunted" than that restaurant, as one comes upon it, in one of the busiest of London thoroughfares, spreading as it does for blocks around, like a conflagration, the festive glare of its electrically emblazoned façade. Yet no ruined mansion, with the moon shining in through its shattered roof, the owl nesting in its banqueting hall, and the snake gliding through its bed chambers, was ever more peopled with phantoms than this radiant palace of prandial gaiety, apparently filled with the festive murmur of happy diners, the jocund strains of its vigorous orchestra, the subdued clash of knives and forks and delicate dishes, the rustle of women's gowns and the fairy music of women's voices. For me its portico, flaming like a vortex of dizzy engulfing light, upon which, as upon a swift current, gay men and women, alighting from motor and hansom,

are swept inward to glittering tables of snow white napery, fair with flowers—for me the mouth of the grave is not less dread, and the walls of a sepulcher are not so painted with dead faces or so inscribed with elegiac memories. I could spend a night in Père-la-Chaise, and still be less aware of the presence of the dead than I was a short time ago, when, greatly daring, I crossed with a shudder that once so familiar threshold.

It was twelve years since I had been in London, so I felt no little of a ghost myself, and I knew too well that it would be vain to look for the old faces. Yes, gone was the huge good-natured commissionaire, who so often in the past, on my arrival in company with some human flower, had flung open the apron of our cab with such reverential alacrity, and on our departure had so gently tucked in the petals of her skirts, smiling the while a respectfully knowing benediction on the prospective continuance of our evening's adventure. Another stood in his place, and watched my lonely arrival with careless indifference. Glancing through the window of the treasurer's office to the right of the hall, I could see that an unfamiliar figure sat at the desk, where in the past so many a cheque had been cashed for me with eager *bonhomie*. Now I reflected that considerable identification would be necessary for that once

light-hearted transaction. It is true that I was welcomed with courtesy by a bowing majordomo, but alas, my welcome was that of a stranger; and when I mounted the ornate, marble-walled staircase leading to the gallery where I had always preferred to sit, I realized that my hat and cane must pass into alien keeping, and that no waiter's face would light up as he saw me threading my way to the sacred table, withdrawn in a nook of the balcony, where one could see and hear all, participate in the general human stir and atmosphere, and yet remain apart.

Ah, no; for the friendly Cockney that once greeted me with an enfolding paternal kindness was substituted broken English of a less companionable accent. A polite young Greek it was who stood waiting respectfully for my order, knowing nothing of all it meant for me—*me*—to be seated at that table again—whereas, had he been one of half a dozen of the waiters of yesteryear, he would have known almost as much as I of the “secret memoirs” of that historic table.

In ordering my meal I made no attempt at sentiment, for my mood went far deeper than sentiment. Indeed, though, every second of the time, I was living so vividly, so cruelly, in the past, I made one heartbroken acknowledgment of the present by beginning with the anachronism of a dry Martini cocktail, which, twelve years previous, was unknown and unattainable in that haunted gallery. That cocktail was a sort of desperate epitaph. It meant that I was alone—alone with my ghosts. Yet it had a certain resurrecting influence, and as I sat there proceeding dreamily with my meal, one face and another would flash before me, and memory after memory reënact itself in the theater of my fancy. So much in my actual surroundings brought back the past with an aching distinctness—particularly the entrance of two charming young people, making rainbows all about them, as, ushered by a smiling waiter, who was evidently no stranger to their felicity, they seated themselves at a neighboring table with a happy sigh, and neglected the menu for a moment or two while they

gazed, rapt and lost, into each other's eyes. How well I knew it all; how easily I could have taken the young man's place, and played the part for which this evening he was so fortunately cast! As I looked at them, I instinctively summoned to my side the radiant shade of Aurea, for indeed she had seemed made of gold—gold and water lilies. And, as of old, when I had called to her, she came swiftly with a luxurious rustle of fragrant skirts, like the sound of the west wind among the summer trees, or the swish and sway of the foam about the feet of Aphrodite. There she sat facing me once more, “a feasting presence made of light”—her hair like a golden wheat sheaf, her eyes like blue flowers amid the wheat, and her bosom, by no means parsimoniously concealed, literally suggesting that the loveliness of all the water lilies in the world was amassed there within her corset as in some precious casket. Ours was not one of the great tragic loves, but I know I shall think of Aurea's bosom on my death bed. At her coming I had ordered champagne—we always drank champagne together, because, as we said, it matched so well with her hair—champagne of a no longer fashionable brand. The waiter seemed a little surprised to hear it asked for, but it had been the only *chic* brand in 19—

“Look at those two yonder,” I said presently, after we had drunk to each other, smiling long into each other's eyes over the brims of our glasses. “You and I were once as they. It is their first wonderful dinner together. Watch them—the poor darlings; it is enough to break one's heart.”

“Do you remember ours?” asked Aurea, quite needlessly.

“I wonder what else I was thinking of—goose!” said I, with tender elegance, as in the old days.

As I said before, Aurea and I had not been tragic in our love. It was more a matter of life—than death; warm, pagan, light-hearted life. Ours was perhaps that most satisfactory of relationships between men and women, which contrives to enjoy the happiness, the fun, even the ecstasy, of loving, while evading its heartache. It was, I suppose,

what one would call a healthy physical enchantment, with lots of tenderness and kindness in it but no possibility of hurt to each other. There was nothing Aurea would not have done for me, or I for Aurea, except—marry each other; and, as a matter of fact, there were certain difficulties on both sides in the way of our doing that, difficulties, however, which I am sure neither of us regretted.

Yes, Aurea and I understood thoroughly what was going on in those young hearts, as we watched them, our eyes starry with remembrance. Who better than we should know that hush and wonder, that sense of enchanted intimacy, which belongs of all moments perhaps in the progress of a passion to that moment when two standing tip-toe on the brink of golden surrender, sit down to their first ambrosial meal together—delicious adventure!—with all the world to watch them, if it choose, and yet aloof in a magic loneliness, as of youthful divinities wrapt in a roseate cloud! Hours of divine expectancy, at once promise and fulfillment. Happy were it for you, lovers, could you thus sit forever, nor pass beyond this moment, touched by some immortalizing wand as those lovers on the Grecian Urn:

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not
grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss.
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

"See," said Aurea presently, "they are getting ready to go. The waiter has brought the bill, and is looking away, suddenly lost in profound meditation. Let us see how he pays the bill. I am sure she is anxious."

"Your old test!" said I. "Do you remember?"

"Yes! And it's one that never fails," said Aurea with decision. "When a woman goes out to dinner with a man for the first time, he little knows how much is going to depend on his way of paying the bill. If, as with some men one meets, he studies it through a microscope and adds it up with anxious brow—meanwhile quite evidently forgetting your presence—how your heart sinks, sinks and hardens—but you are glad all

the same, and next day you congratulate yourself on your narrow escape!"

"Was I like that?" said I.

"Did we escape?" asked Aurea. Then she added, touching my arm as with a touch of honeyed fire: "Oh, I'm so glad! He did it delightfully—quite *en prince*. Just the right nonchalance—and perhaps, poor dear, he's as poor—"

"As we often were," I added.

And then through the corners of our eyes we saw the young lovers rise from the table, and the man enfold his treasure in her opera cloak, oh, so reverently, oh, so tenderly, as though he were wrapping up some holy flower. And oh, those deep eyes she gave him, half turning her head as he did so!

"That look," whispered Aurea, quoting Tennyson, "had been a clinging kiss but for the street."

Then suddenly they were gone, caught up like Enoch, into heaven—some little heaven, maybe, like one that Aurea and I remember, high up under the ancient London roofs.

But, with their going, alas, Aurea had vanished, too, and I was left alone with my Greek waiter, who was asking me what cheese I would prefer.

With the coming of coffee and cognac, I lit my cigar and settled down to deliberate reverie, as an opium smoker gives himself up to his dream. I savored the bitter-sweetness of my memories; I took a strange pleasure in stimulating the ache of my heart with vividly recalled pictures of innumerable dead hours. I systematically passed from table to table all around that spacious peristyle. There was scarcely one at which I had not sat with some vanished companion in those years of ardent, irresponsible living which could never come again. Not always a woman had been the companion whose form I thus conjured out of the past, too often out of the grave; for the noble friendship of youth haunted those tables as well, with its generous starry-eyed enthusiasms and passionate loyalties. Poets of whom but their songs remain, themselves by tragic pathways descended into the hollow land, had read their verses to me there, still glittering with the dawn dew of their creation, as

we sat together over the wine and talked of the only matters then—and perhaps even yet—worth talking of: love and literature. Of these but one can still be met in London streets, but all now wear crowns of varying brightness—

Where the oldest bard is as the young,
And the pipe is ever dropping honey,
And the lyre's strings are ever strung.

Dear boon fellows of life as well as literature, how often have we risen from those tables, to pursue together the not too swiftly flying petticoat, through the terrestrial firmament of shining streets, aglow with the midnight sun of pleasure, a-dazzle with eyes brighter far than the city lamps—passionate pilgrims of the morning star! Ah, we go on such quests no more—"another race hath been and other palms are won."

No, not always women—but naturally women nearly always, for it was the time of rosebuds, and we were wisely gathering them while we might—

Through the many to the one—
O so many!
Kissing all and missing none,
Loving any.

Every man who has lived a life worthy the name of living has his own private dream of fair women, the memory of whom is as a provision laid up against the lean years that must come at last, however long they may be postponed by some special grace of the gods, which is, it is good to remember, granted to some—the years when one has reluctantly to accept that the lovely game is almost, if not quite, at an end, and to watch the bloom and abundance of fragrant young creatures pass us, unregarding, by. And, indeed, it may happen that a man who has won what is for him the fairest of all fair faces, and has it still by his side, may enter sometimes, without disloyalty, that secret gallery of those other fair faces that were his before hers in whom they are all summed up and surpassed had dawned upon his life. We shall hardly be loyal to the present if we are coldly disloyal to the past. In the lover's calendar, while there is but one Madonna, there must still be minor saints, to whom it is meet, at certain times and seasons, to offer retrospective candles—

saints that, after the manner of many saints, were once such charming sinners for our sakes that utter forgetfulness of them were an impious boorishness surely unacceptable to the most jealous of Madonnas. Public worship of them is not, of course, desirable, but occasional private celebrations are surely more than permissible—such celebrations as that "night of memory and tears" which Landor consecrated to Rose Aylmer or that song which Thackeray consecrated to certain loves of the long ago—

Gillian's dead, God rest her bier,
How I loved her twenty years syne!
Marian's married, but I sit here,
Alone and merry at forty year,
Dipping my nose in the Gascon wine.

So I, seated in my haunted restaurant, brought the burnt offerings of several cigars, and poured out various libations to my own private Gillians and Marians, and in fancy sat and looked into Angelica's eyes at this table, and caressed Myrtle's opaled hand at that, and read Sylvia a poem I had just written for her at still another. "Whose names are five sweet symphonies," wrote Rossetti. Yes, symphonies, indeed, in the ears of memory are the names of the lightest loves that fluttered butterfly-like across our path in the golden summer of our lives, each name calling up its human counterpart, with her own endearing personality distinguishing her from all other girls, her way of smiling, her way of talking, her way of being serious, all the little originalities on which she prided herself, her so solemnly held differentia of tastes and manners—all, in a word, that made you realize that you were dining with Corinna and not with Chloe. What a service of contrast each—all unwittingly, need one say—did the other, just in the same fashion as contrasting colors accentuate the special quality one of the other. To have dined last night with Amaryllis, with her Titian red hair and green eyes, her tropic languor, and honey-drowsy ways, was to feel all the keener zest in the presence of Callithoe on the following evening, with her delicate soul-lit face, and eager responsiveness of look and gesture—*blonde cendré*, and *fausse maigre*—a being one of the hot

noon, the other a creature of the starlight. But I disclaim the sultanesque savor of thus writing of these dear bearers of symphonic names. To talk of them as flowers and fruit, as color and perfume, as ivory and velvet, is to seem to forget the best of them, and the best part of loving them and being loved again; for that consisted in their comradeship, their enchanted comradeship, the sense of shared adventure, the snatching of a fearful joy together. For a little while we had escaped from the drab and songless world, and, cost what it might, we were determined to take possession, for a while at least, of that paradise which sprang into existence at the moment when "male and female created *He* them." Such divine foolishness, let discretion warn, or morality frown, or society play the censorious hypocrite, "were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

"Ah, then," says every man to himself of such hours, as I said to myself in my haunted restaurant—"ah, then came in the sweet o' the year."

But lovely and pleasant as were the memories over which I thus sat musing, there was one face immeasurably beyond all others that I had come there hoping and yet fearing to meet again, hers of whom for years that seem past counting all the awe and wonder and loveliness of the world have seemed but the metaphor. Endless years ago she and I had sat at this table where I was now sitting and had risen from it with breaking hearts, never to see each other's face, hear each other's voice again. Voluntarily, for another's sake, we were breaking our hearts, renouncing each other, putting from us all the rapture and religion of our loving, dying then and there that another might live—vain sacrifice! Once and again, long silences apart, a word or two would wing its way across lands and seas and tell us both that we were still under the same sky and were still what nature had made us from the beginning—each other's. But long since that veil of darkness unpierced of my star has fallen between us, and no longer do I hear the rustle of her gown in the autumn woods, nor do the spring winds carry me the sweetness of her faithful

thoughts any more. So I dreamed maybe that, after the manner of phantoms, we might meet again on the spot where we had both died—but alas, though the wraiths of lighter loving came gaily to my call, she of the starlit silence and the tragic eyes came not, though I sat long awaiting her—sat on till the tables began to be deserted, and the interregnum between dinner and after-theater supper had arrived. No, I began to understand that she could no longer come to me: we must both wait till I could go to her.

And with this thought in my mind, I set about preparing to take my leave, but at that moment I was startled—almost superstitiously—startled by a touch on my shoulder. I was not to leave those once familiar halls without one recognition, after all. It was our old waiter of all those years ago, who, with an almost paternal gladness, was telling me how good it was to see me again, and, with consolatory mendacity, was assuring me that I had hardly changed a bit. God bless him—he will never know what good it did me to have his honest recognition. The whole world was not yet quite dead and buried, after all, nor was I quite such an unremembered ghost as I had seemed. Dear old Jim Lewis! So some of the old guard were still on deck, after all! And, I was thinking as I looked at him: "He, too, has looked upon her face. He it was who poured out our wine, that last time together." Then I had a whim. My waiter had been used to them in the old days.

"Jim," I said, "I want you to give this half-sovereign to the bandmaster and ask him to play Chopin's 'Funeral March.' There are not many people in the place, so perhaps he won't mind. Tell him it's for an old friend of yours, and in memory of all the happy dinners he had here long ago."

So to the strains of that death music, which so strangely blends the piercing pathos of lost things with a springlike sense of resurrection, a spherical melody of immortal promise, I passed once more through the radiant portals of my necropolitan restaurant into the resounding thoroughfares of still living and still loving humanity.

FIFTY YEARS SPENT

By Maxwell Struthers Burt

FIIFTY years spent before I found me,
Wind on my mouth and the taste of rain,
Where the great hills circled and swept around me
And the torrents leapt to the mist-drenched plain;
Ah, it was long this coming of me,
Back to the hills and the sounding sea.

Ye who can go when so it tideth
To fallow fields when the Spring is new,
Finding a spirit that there abideth,
Taking fill of the sun and the dew,
Little ye know of the cross of the town
And the small pale folk who go up and down.

Fifty years spent before I found me
A bank knee deep with climbing rose,
Saw, or had space to look around me,
Knew how the apple buds and blows;
And all the while that I thought me wise
I walked as one with blinded eyes.

Scarcely a lad who passes twenty
But finds him a girl to balm his heart;
Only I, who had work so plenty,
Bade this loving keep apart;
Once I saw a girl in a crowd,
But I hushed my heart when it cried out loud.

City courts in January,
City courts in wilted June,
Often ye will catch and carry
Echoes of some straying tune:
Ah, but underneath the feet
Echoes stifle in a street.

Fifty years spent, and what do they bring me?
Now I can buy the meadow and hill:
Where is the heart of the boy to sing thee?
Where is the life for thy living to fill?
And thirty years back in a city crowd
I passed a girl when my heart cried loud!

THE BREAKING LOOSE OF MR. SMALLEY

By David Quarella

A SMALL, nervous-looking man was sitting in a first class carriage on the main line of the Great Western Railway. He was looking out of the window at a landscape whose uninspiring effect was heightened by the sombre gloom of an English October afternoon. But he plainly was not engaged in thinking of country hedges or homely farm-houses. His pale yellow hair was tousled, his fingers were agitatedly playing with one another, and from time to time he bit his underlip with teeth which, rabbit-like in their prominence, were well suited by nature to the task. Anyone seeing him would have detected at once that he was in some kind of trouble.

And indeed it was so. For this little man had come to one of those crises which occur in almost every life, when a man has to make up his mind about some large and looming problem. The thing is there, insistent and inevitable; it will not be said nay; it must be dealt with. With some men such crises call out latent decisiveness, or even unsuspected genius; but the mind of Samuel Edward Smalley was one which, possessing little profundity, and unused to the process of being made up, resolutely refused to fulfill its function at the moment. Mr. Smalley, indeed, had led a sheltered life. Early days of infantile calm and of schoolboyish mediocrity had been succeeded by a youth of suburban serenity, in the midst of which, always firm in his adherence to the correct and orthodox, Samuel Edward had drifted into matrimony with scarcely more than a ripple of sentimental excitement. He seemed, indeed, one of those whom God

has providently disposed to fulfill, and to be content in fulfilling, the uninspiring but necessary life part of a clerk in the city with a family in the suburbs. It appeared, therefore, almost treachery on the part of the Creator when Mr. Smalley's previously uneventful existence was suddenly subjected to a succession of remarkable shocks. Surely no sane and just being would pour lumps of quartz into a machine he had made to turn out sausages; yet the effect on Mr. Smalley's system of the incidents thrown into his life by fate was very much the same as that of quartz blocks introduced into a sausage machine. It dislocated the works.

The first shock to a hitherto secure existence came in the guise of good fortune. A distant relative, dying, left Mr. Smalley enough of a fortune to deliver him for the future from the beneficent necessity of earning his own living. As a consequence, a mind educated and accustomed to a dull but sufficiently absorbing routine of ledgers and letters was set loose on a world of unexplored and unintelligible facts where it not only felt a stranger but found no satisfying occupation. The tentacles of his clerk's mind were not sufficiently wide-spreading to find him interests in his new life; while at the same time his character was set, and his tastes such as precluded any large or sustained development. Under the circumstances Mr. Smalley was more or less forced into the cultivation of that quality latent in almost every human breast and fatally attractive to those who have unexpectedly risen from a low rung of the ladder of life to the rung

above it—the quality of snobbishness. His new luster, his previous obscurity, his vacant time and his comparatively empty mind all combined to drive the little ex-man-of-business into that companionable boredom by which the idle attempt to while away time which they are incapable of spending alone, and which is dignified by the name of society. It was only suburban society, of course, and in that it was the worse. At the top there is, at all events, wealth and glamor and glitter—a living, flowing, super-cinematograph to rush the senses off their feet. But for Mr. Smalley there were only dull dinners, stupid teas and ineffable garden parties, at which, clad in the correctest of suburban tennis garb—white trousers and a dainty white shirt with a starched linen collar and art tie—he feebly emulated the movements of those younger men with whom, luckier in their generation, the cultivation of an early aptitude had resulted in their elevation to fame at the local club. Even Mr. Smalley sometimes felt bored.

Now there is one pursuit—amusement—hobby—study—call it what you will, which is open to the meanest intellect and to the most sordid soul, even as it is also able to absorb the highest and noblest qualities of a great nature—and that is sex. No matter how full his life, a man has usually got to find time for this department of human activity, and when a man's existence is empty, it frequently remains, as the most cursory observation of a London drawing room, a county ball or Piccadilly on a fine evening will show, almost the only resource of a jaded nature. To Samuel Edward Smalley, at his elevation to suburban society, sex was to all effects and purposes a new experience. It is true he had married; but he had taken his wife more or less as he took his conventional whiskey-and-sodas, because most people did. He fell into matrimony like a ripe plum into a basket. His wife, for her part, laboring under the disadvantages of a carefully guarded youth and a genteel education, and mistaking, like most girls who have been blessed with nice-minded parents, the first buds and blossoms of natural desire for a divine

revelation from on high as to the person with whom she should in future keep house, not only accepted but welcomed her fate. Her parents, feeling that they had completed their duty to their offspring by attaching her to something in trousers, resigned her with a sigh of mingled regret and relief to her new keeper. She made, indeed, a useful and dutiful wife. Two children soon testified to her willingness and ability to pay nature's bill, and, lapsing into a comfortable domesticity, she found in her home, family and friends the interests and amusements so sadly missing in the case of her husband. Nature had finished with her from the point of view of a producer, and only needed her as a rearer. Hence sex, so soon to play the deuce with Mr. Smalley, whose activities an incomprehensible Creator apparently felt he still needed, troubled not his spouse.

It was on a scene of still solid, if slightly disintegrating, domestic serenity that there fell the second blow of fate. Samuel Edward Smalley fell in love. To a mind and nature already unable to cope with their surroundings, this new shock came as something of a catastrophe. Mr. Smalley felt the world, his new world, was crumbling about him. He had read of such things, of course; but he had never associated his readings with real life—with his own life. He was married; he had children; he lived near a Tube station. He felt like some marionette, agitated from above. Thus he thought, when he did think; but for the most part all thought was stifled by an ecstasy of delirious delight of which the feeblest are capable under the stimulus of sex emotion. To do him justice, he did not for a long time fully realize what was happening. Like most real love affairs, it began imperceptibly. As a rule it is only emotional experts who are possessed of the faculty of falling in love at first sight—and knowing it. Mr. Smalley's love history took its origin in such prosaic incidents as a set of tennis (in which Mr. Smalley and his fateful partner were beaten badly by the runner up for the East of London Open Championship and the rec-

tor's daughter). It was not only her splendid calm under trying circumstances (there were two net balls in the last game); it was her—well, to be perfectly frank, it was her body. Mr. Smalley thought he had never seen such legs. And Dora—her name was Dora—had the sense and taste to wear a short white skirt well above the ankles—such ankles, too! Then there were the dozens of trifling occasions when Mr. Smalley saw, admired—and was amazed to find himself seeing and admiring so palpably. He had also a difficulty in meeting her eyes. In fact, for the first time, he was in that delicious and never-to-be-forgotten state when, by some magnificent distortion of nature, one person's acts, thoughts, even dreams, are more important than the combined activities and passions of all the rest of the world.

Of course Mr. Smalley did not confide in his wife. She would not have understood; and, at first, the whole affair was innocent enough. Afterward to confide was, obviously, impossible. And although that pitch was not reached for some time, the intermediate stages were so undefined, the gradations of the growing passion so easy and natural, that at no particular point did it seem feasible to Mr. Smalley to unburthen himself. Indeed, so timorously did the new lover feel his way; so halting, inexperienced—almost reluctant—were his advances, that not only was the development of his affair protracted over nearly a year, but its ultimate consummation came, not as a violent and sudden event, but almost as an easy and inevitable conclusion to a long and well knit chain of circumstances. As a train glides to rest by a platform at the end of its journey, so Mr. Smalley quietly and naturally arrived at the appointed limit of his lovemaking. There was, indeed, no observable change in his domestic habits or environment the day after a certain memorable moonlight picnic on the river, at which Mr. Smalley and Dora had contrived to be marooned in a punt, and had arrived at the landing stage with, perhaps, just a suspicion of oddly mingled terror and exaltation in their bearing.

Just as, indeed, there had been no observable change after any of the other meetings and incidents which marked the onward march of fate. True, a year ago Mr. Smalley had been, it may be, a little more affectionate to his wife, and in her intimate moments the poor little woman lamented, almost unconsciously, the lapsing of what was to her, despite all her suburban gentility, a high ideal. But she put it all down to the inexorable dealings of a just and correct Providence which made things grow old and men alter and feelings die. Somewhere she had read that the average life of a grand passion is three years; and she knew in the recesses of her heart that her passion had not even been grand. So she accepted as a common and mournful necessity the growing chilliness that froze the endearments out of conduct and the zest out of conversations, and set herself to find a more abiding interest in the younger generation. Still—she did sometimes regret, and even frame her regret into definite shape. "Why can't things be the same?" she would think to herself. "Why can't he *sometimes* be the same? Must we all grow cold? Those wonderful days on our honeymoon, will no touch of them ever return? The places are there, and we. I'm not old. He is not old. Why can't it be the same?"

But she never told anyone. And Samuel Edward Smalley, when he dared look into his heart, conceived himself a successful deceiver, and, on the whole, an affectionate and dutiful husband. Who was he to control his affections? They were beyond him. It was fate, not he, that was to blame. His wife did not need his passion; did not expect it; would not like it, even. And after all—so long as she got along all right . . .

There he left it.

Then the third blow fell. Dora delivered it. To anyone who is interested in the preposterous incongruity of the Unknown's dealings with man, the love of Dora for Samuel Edward Smalley would make an absorbing study. Except on the theory that nature consistently attempts to attain the average, there was no excuse for Dora's conduct.

Why should a high-spirited, beautiful, attractive girl, fit mate, surely, for a hero, or at all events for one of the local golf champions, love, be infatuated by and surrender to a weedy little sandy-haired ex-clerk? The problem defies reason and logic. It must be sighed over and given up. But, whatever the recalcitrant cause, Dora did the inconceivable. More than that, she did it not merely as an amusement, not just for experience or sensation, but with all the passion of a strong and emotional nature. Samuel was, to her, her dream, her god. When nature blinded her eyes, nature did it well. Moreover, Dora was not a materialist. She desired an ideal, not an interest. She had never really thought it out when she gave herself to her lover, but the idea of taking second place, of abating from what she in her intoxication conceived to be a noble aspiration—the total and undivided possession of Samuel Edward Smalley, mind, soul and little measly body—was repugnant to her whole character and disposition. And then she delivered the blow that sent Mr. Smalley's senses reeling, imposed on his already overtaxed mind a new and terrible burden, and left him eventually in a first class railway carriage on the Great Western Railway twitching his fingers and gazing intently on an unusually uninteresting landscape.

She wrote to tell him that, unless he would come to her definitely and forever, she could never see him again. It was put at greater length than that, it was accompanied by long explanations, plaintive excuses, tearful appeals, but that is what it came to. Mr. Smalley was stunned.

Even Mrs. Smalley noticed the difference. Small natures under great strain find relief in snappishness, and Mr. Smalley bore his cross with a restiveness that was apparent to the world. For a whole day he pondered the problem—after an ineffectual attempt to extort a personal interview; and for that day he was something abnormal, a strange beast, growling at all who approached. "Don't know what's up with Smalley," said a man at the club. "Very queer today. Must be sickening for something."

"What's the matter with Mr. Smalley, mother?" whispered the daughter of a retired general (Indian Army). "He's generally so nice." "Merry and bright, I don't think," was the terse comment of Sarah, the under-housemaid. Mrs. Smalley did not audibly add to the general chorus, but none the less she marked and inwardly digested. The only result was an ineffectual attempt to soothe by additional attention, and then quiet resignation. Mr. Smalley, left alone, brooded.

It happened that on the next day he had to go to Cardiff in order to attend to certain business. He had spent a restless night, filled with unfruitful reasonings and plannings. Face to face with a dilemma which he considered quite unreasonable, his mind and his heart—or perhaps more correctly his mind and his passions—pulled him in opposite directions. But the sudden nature of the shock he had received and the whirlwind of emotions thereby aroused made it hard to carry on the fight in that spirit of calm judgment which, the world holds, should rule us at these moments. Mr. Smalley's life was in the melting pot, and the temperature engendered militated against coolness. The predominant feeling, surging above argument, even above timidity, was a fierce antagonism to the tearing away from him of his newfound joy and treasure. Higher allies came to the aid of physical desire. She was noble; she was pure (of course, until he came); he had his obligations to her. And argument of a conscientious kind was not lacking. His wife was better without him. He was unfaithful—even if he took what the world would call the right course, his life would be either false or insupportable. So the morning found him distinctly overbalancing on the side of Dora.

Then came his journey. To some people the rhythmic, monotonous rattle and thump of railway traveling is provocative of thought. Mr. Smalley, free of the associations of home, with Mrs. Smalley and the children, so to speak, dwindling on the horizon, felt freer to think and act. Moreover, there is always a savor of adventure about even the humblest

voyage. The sight of trains or of ships, going Lord knows where, of men and women moving, free, their own masters, often makes a man aware that he is more independent than he sometimes suspects. The scales began to descend still further in the direction of Dora. At the moment that Mr. Smalley suddenly became aware, by the occurrence of Swindon flashing past, that he was looking out of the window and that half his journey was over, the matter was practically decided. For a moment he let his overstrained mind grow lax. Afterward he remembered thinking aimlessly that Swindon must be the very birthplace of steam engines. Then he took his fateful resolution. His time had come. The crisis was over.

Reaching up to the rack above him, he pulled down a despatch box, drew out a pad and some envelopes, took his fountain pen out of his waistcoat pocket and began to write. He was used to writing in the train, and he made quite a creditable job of it. First he would write to Dora.

"Darling," he began, "I have had to think everything over very hard. That is why I only write now. Things have been intolerable lately; they shall be all right after this. Come to me and we will have a real honeymoon—we have never had a real one yet, though we have been each other's so long. But now you shall know what it is to be loved wholly, openly, unashamedly. You shall have the real delights of marriage—those we have had are nothing compared to what we shall have. Will it not be splendid after these last horrid months? You have taught me how to love; I will repay you now. Get away without letting anyone know. You can do it. Meet me at"—here he paused, thought for a moment, went on—"the Wellington Hotel, Cardiff, tomorrow. I shall be there by eight P.M. and will have got rooms for us. Ask for me, and say you are my wife (how good the word sounds!). I can get money, and everything that is necessary. And then—for our honeymoon—our real honeymoon. Your Boy." He finished, and breathed heavily.

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Now for his wife. This was harder. Tearing off the letter he had written, he meditatively sucked the end of his pen and gazed at the blank sheet of paper. It offered him no inspiration. Then he reflected. Why should he write to his wife yet? Time enough when matters had settled themselves irretrievably. After all, it was no use writing until then. And—"the best laid plans . . ." He withdrew his pen from his mouth. No, he would not write yet. When he did, his letter should be a proclamation of a fact, not the announcement of an intention. Instead of beginning the other letter, he took out an envelope from his writing case and began to address it. "She won't know at once," he absently reflected as he mechanically wrote on; "she won't know at once." He remained for a moment in a reverie, weighing it all up. Then he breathed a sigh of relief and set the envelope aside. The ordeal was over. The die was cast. Henceforth he had not to think, he had to act: a far easier task. He became almost cheerful. With something of the pleasure of an artist he re-read the letter he had written. Really it was quite good. He must be more of a man of the world than he imagined. He had the touch—the light reading he had indulged in told him that.

He began to be proud of himself. Filled with his new spirit of daredevil, he slipped the letter into its envelope almost blithely; reflecting as he did so how good it was to be a man capable of decisive action at a great moment. He was about to seal the letter when—"Tickets, please"—the door of his compartment swung open. There was a sudden inrush of cold air from the corridor, and Mr. Smalley was confronted by the stern face of one of the company's officials. This unexpected incursion had a dynamic effect on the newborn man of the world. His courage, strung up to the pitch at which he was equal to dealing with an imaginary universe, was not yet sufficient to cope with anything concrete, even of an entirely innocuous description. Mr. Smalley's blitheness deserted him, his con-

fidence evaporated, and he felt precisely like a burglar caught redhanded. He blushed a deep scarlet, nervously fumbled in impossible pockets, stammered unnecessary and halting apologies, and eventually produced his ticket with the air of a man who had attempted to swindle the company and failed. His brain was whirling, his heart palpitating madly, and rarely can an innocent inspector have produced a more complete mental and moral rout in a human creature. Courteously thanking him, the official took his departure, and as the door closed, Mr. Smalley breathed a deep sigh of relief. "Silly," he said to himself, "silly—might have been a criminal." And then, with some return of his old spirit: "Lord, if he'd only been able to read that letter!"

At this a sudden idea struck him. He leapt to his feet and opened the door. "Inspector!" he cried. "Inspector!" He would show him he wasn't a bally fool; and at the same time he would set the seal on his act of deliverance. The inspector hurried back. His brain still whirling slightly, his color still a little heightened, Mr. Smalley hastily sealed and stamped his letter and thrust it into the official's hand. "Take this and post it, will you, at Newport? And here—here's a shilling; thanks so much." The door closed. Mr. Smalley sat down and breathed hard. It was now irrevocable. To make quite sure, when in a few minutes they had left Newport and again the man came round for tickets, Mr. Smalley asked if he had posted the letter. Yes, he had posted it. "Tomorrow—" thought Mr. Smalley; but there his imagination partly failed him. He ran into Cardiff in something between a dream and a nightmare.

The hours that succeeded were a curious compound of half-real apprehension and happy anticipation. No one can cut loose from the ties of home and the associations of years without experiencing something of a shock. Mr. Smalley would have been more than human if he could have contemplated the severance of so many strands of his life without some misgiving or fear. On the other hand, his passion for Dora offered him a

lively picture of future delight. Even in the comparative chilliness of his large room at the Wellington (he had prepared for the morrow by taking a small suite and announcing the expected arrival of "Mrs. Smalley"), he was unable to throw off the intoxicating glamor provided by the image of Dora at last his own—all his own—his very own. No more scheming, plotting, hasty and unsatisfactory meetings, even sordid appointments in second rate little restaurants. Open, unabashed possession now! The idea was very delicious. And—this evening, at eight—he panted for the passage of time. Of her coming he had no doubt. They had more than once talked over what they should do "if things came to the worst." Dora was not only a passionate woman, she was a practical woman—a commoner combination than some people suppose. She was, moreover, a woman of her word. In her last letter she had reminded her lover of their previous talks, and confirmed the suggestion she had then made. "I will do anything you wish," she had said, "if only by it I am to be yours. But if I am not wholly yours, I cannot any more be anything to you." Yes, she would come.

When he found time, in the intervals of his passionate dreams of his possession of Dora, to reflect on the other side of the picture, Mr. Smalley did so more with a kind of impersonal interest than with any real and vivid apprehension. After all, a man could break loose if he liked. He was an individual, he had his rights, he had his power to live his own life in his own way. As for his own wife—she should not suffer, she would not suffer. It was a curious fatality, he thought, that she should have had to be so long with a man who did not desire her—as, he knew, other men desired her. Well, let them have her now—he would be in the way no longer. Yes, it was all for the best. There would be a crash, no doubt; that was the brutal English way; but afterward it would be all for the best. Sometimes, indeed, on the confines of his intelligence, there did appear for a fleeting moment the doubt that, having failed to sustain a passion

for one woman, he might also fail to sustain it for another; that, in fact, his present outburst might be merely a rebellion and not a revolution; that in the end he would find that the change had been of no avail. But at worst this was only a dim shadow of a suspicion, and was easily put to flight by the sum of coming delights.

As evening drew on, however, doubts and suspicions of a different nature began to assail him. Had things gone right? Had Dora got away? Was it possible that, after all, in spite of all her courage and staunchness, she would fail him? Where would he be then—after that letter to his wife? And then, back to the first and deepest fear. Was he really right to break loose? The image of a desolate little wife, now probably prostrate in tears, rose before him and would not be dismissed. As he walked up St. Mary Street toward the hotel, he clenched his hands angrily and muttered to himself. What right had these unpleasant visions to come and try to spoil his ecstasy? Even at this moment Dora must be in the hotel—waiting for him. He quickened his pace. After all, he had done it; it was accomplished now; there was no going back. Curiously enough, he did not feel quite so thankful now as he had done last night. It was indeed a big step to take, involving great things to three lives. Three? No, five. And in his mind he saw the two "kids" asking "Where is daddy, mummy, where is daddy?" And mummy would— Oh, it was no use thinking of it; just ahead in the hotel there was something to make up for all that.

Again he hastened his steps. The hotel was only a few yards from him now. Somehow he felt a little frightened and bashful. It had seemed very simple before; now he felt it would be appallingly difficult to ask, in that quiet natural manner he had postulated, for "Mrs.

Smalley." Surely he would stammer, blush, give himself away somehow. Or she would have done so when she came. Why had he had to go so far afield today? Why had he not been there to meet her? God only knew what she might have said or done; she could not be used to this sort of thing; she was sure to have made a mess of it. He scented suspicion in the very smile of the boots as he entered the brilliantly lit hall. The lift man seemed to have a covert sneer on his face. He hated them all. Looking round, he scanned the place for Dora.

No, she was not there; he had not expected her to be there. She would be upstairs in the sitting room, of course. He must ask if she had come; it would look odd if he did not. Nerving himself, he walked to the office. "Has Mrs. Smalley come?" he asked as calmly as he could. The young lady smiled at him affably. "Oh, yes, sir; she came an hour or so ago; she's upstairs." Thank God, there was no second meaning in that smile. Dora had not fumbled. And—she was upstairs, now, waiting. He strode up the stairs two at a time (no lift for him—it was only the first floor); his heart beat fast; the image of his own wife had gone; in its place there was another, of rich red lips and white arms and warm curls of hair nestling on a perfect neck. Seventy-one—that was the number; she would not need warning. As the door swung back a woman jumped to her feet from an easy chair and ran toward him. In a moment his wife's arms were round his neck, and a voice full of passionate tears of joy cried: "Oh, darling—oh, darling—you sweet darling, to think of this!"

The room swam; with a peculiar lost feeling Mr. Smalley sat on the table. Then he looked up at the radiant woman in front of him. "I thought—you'd like it," he said slowly.



THE Supreme Platitudes of Nature: The Great Dipper—the Riviera—the vermiciform appendix.

OF MOIRA UP THE GLEN

By Edward J. O'Brien

IT'S little that I'd care for the glories of Ireland,
Waiting for the shadows to gather in the glen,
Come the time of darkness, sitting by the hearth-light,
Whispering with bated breath for fear the little men
Should catch us and spell us to serve them for a year's time,
Toiling and moiling within a faëry snare.
I'm thinkin' 'twould be fearsome in the gray misty strangeness.—
'Tis hiding we'll be in the clear free air!

The sunlight above us, and willow hedge for shelter,
A tangle of soft things to rustle by the stream,
Where Moira, my white dove, whose beauty is my sorrow,
Would sit with me and travel on the long bright dream,
Travel with the water from the mountain to the meadow,
Down across the lowlands and gaily to the sea,
Out beyond the breakers to the shimmer of a far line
Poised and trembling within the heart of me.

What shall I murmur to coax the dream of beauty
Out from the shadows to welcome in the dawn?
How shall I sing it that she may know the glory,
Know it and come by the first flush of morn?
The moonlight is dark light, 'tis fear I'm after feelin',
The fairies should be in it and steal her heart away,
A goblet for their feasting, they'd drain it and fill it
With dreams of a far world beyond the light of day.

It's God's light I'm wanting, and Moira to see it,
See it and tremble with the love of God,
And seeing it she'd turn, and look within my own eyes,
And wonder at the vision transforming a sod
Into worshipful silence and thought that is living,
Burning, and shaped by the warmth of its fire
To a chalice of tears and of laughter for singing
The lovely unfolding of dream-purged desire.

THE NIGHT ROMANCE OF EUROPE: LONDON

By Willard Huntington Wright

This is the third in the series of articles dealing with the night romance of the European capitals. The attitude taken in these essays is different from that in any articles heretofore written. There is no ethical criticism in them, nor any attempt to make of them a guide to the night life of the different Continental cities. They are written in the spirit of their subject matter, and endeavor to set forth the romance of their theme. The first article dealt with Vienna; the second, with Berlin. Next month, Paris.

I AM not a stranger to the lures of London. On my annual pilgrimage to Munich—Munich the buoyant, the *gemüthlich*—*Famoser Ort! Prachtvolle Stadt!*—most fascinating of burgs, the apotheosis of municipal loveliness—Munich the golden, the liquorish, the seductive—but to repeat: on my yearly beerbibbing marathon to Munich I halt, coming and going, in London. I merge myself in her interminable grayness for weeks at a time. I take London very much in the spirit of the Magdalene taking the veil—by way of penance. . . . I curse its sedateness. I damn its aloofness. I hurl anathemas into the formidable bowels of its narrow streets. But I always stay for weeks at a time. London holds me. Its very chilliness gets into my blood and seduces me: I am fascinated by its drab ugliness.

And so I am no stranger to its moods and whims. I am not merely a casual outsider who has looked upon it, sniffed deprecatingly and taken the train for Dover—which leads to Calais—which leads to Paris—which leads to youthful romance. I have wallowed in London as the ascetic wallows in his punitive rites, with a strange, keen joy. I have been a voluntary St. Simeon on its cold gray street corners. For many months

I have lived in a baroque apartment on Adam Street in the midst of actors and other rare fowl. I have eaten so often—and so much—at Simpson's that I know two of the waiters by their first names. And I could order correctly their famous cuts by looking at my watch, knowing at what hour the mutton was ready, at what hour the roast beef was rarest. So long have I worn English shirts that even now I find myself crawling into the American brand after the manner of the woodchuck burrowing into his hole. Frequently I find myself proffering dimes to the fair uniformed virgins of our theaters who present me with programmes. I have read each separate slab in Westminster Abbey. I have made suave and courtly love to a thousand nursemaids in Hyde Park. I have exuded great globules of perspiration rowing on the Thames, while the fair beneficiary of my labors lolled placidly in the boat's stern upon a hummock of Persian pillows. I know every overhanging lovers' tree from Richmond to Hampton Court. I have consumed hogsheads of ale at "The Sign of the Cock." I have followed the horses at Epsom and Newmarket, at Goodwood and Ascot. I have browsed for hours in French's book store. I have lounged in

luxurious taxicabs upholstered in pale gray, and ridden interminably back and forth through the Mall, Constitution Hill and Piccadilly. . . .

All of these things have I done. And more. In brief, I have lived the dashing and reckless life of a dozen Londoners. But—and here is the point!—I have lived it *in the daytime*. When the shadows began to drift into the fogs and the twilight settled over the gray masonry of the city, I would generally fly to the theater and afterward to my garish rooms in Adam Street; or, as was often the case, I would merely fly to my flat, giving up my evenings to the low humor of Rabelais, or to deep, deep sleep.

Although for years one could not lose me in London, or flabbergast me with those leaning-tower-of-Pisa addresses (the items piled one upon the other in innumerable strata), I knew nothing of the goings-on when the windows of London became patches of orange light. In fact, I assumed that when I slept London also snored. To think of London and of night romance was like conjuring up the wildest of anachronisms. Romance there was in London, but to me it had always been shot through with sunshine. It had been the hard commercial romance of the Stock Exchange. Or the courteous and impeccable romance of polished hats and social banalities. Or the gustatory romance of Cheddar cheese, musty ale, roast lamb and greens. Or it had been the romance of the Cook's tourist—the romance of cathedrals, towers, palaces, dungeons and Parliamentary buildings. Or the romance of pomp, of horseguards and helmets and epaulettes and brass buttons and guns at "present arms." Or it had been the anaemic romance of Ceylon tea, toasted muffins and *petits fours*. As for amours and intrigues and subdued lights and dances and cabarets and sparkling *demi-mondaines* and all-night orchestras and liquid jousting bouts and perfume and champagne and rouge and kohl—who would have thought that London, the severe, the formal; London, the saintly, the high-collared, the stiff; London, the serious, the practical, the kid-gloved; London,

the arctic, the methodical, the fixed, the ceremonious, the starched, the precise, the punctilious, the conservative, the static; London, the God-fearing, the episcopal, the nice, the careful, the scrupulous, the aloof, the decorous, the proper, the dignified—who would have thought that London would loosen up and relax and partake of the potions of Eros and Bacchus?

And yet—and yet—back of London's grim and formidable exterior there lurks a smile. Her stiff and proper legs know how to shake themselves. Her cold and sluggish blood grows warm to the strains of dance music. Her desensitized and asphalt palate thrills and throbs beneath the tricklings of *Cordon Rouge*. Her steel heart flutters at the touch of a wheedling Phryne. She, too, can wear the strumpet garb of youth. She, too, in the vitals of her nature, longs for the gay romance of the Boulevard Montparnasse ere the American possessed it. She, too, admires the rhythmic parabolic curve of bare shoulders. Silken ankles and amorous whisperings stir her—if not to deeds of valor, then at least to deeds of indiscretion. London, it seems, cannot look upon the moon without suffering some of the love qualms of Endymion. In fine, London, the mentalized, is human.

It was only last year that rumors of London's night life sank into the depths of my sensitive ears. At first I put such murmurings aside as the psychiatric ravings of visionaries and yearners. Always at the first signs of neurosis—the inevitable result of the simple life—I dashed to Paris, to the golden-haired Reine at the Marigny; or else I cabled to Anna of the Admiral's Palast in Berlin; or, if time permitted, I sought the glittering presence of Bianca Weise at Vienna. (Ah, Bianca! *Du süsser Engel!*) Never once did it occur to me that youth stalked abroad in the London streets, that gaiety sang among the wine cups in London cafés, that romance went drunk amid the mazes of abandoned dancing. London had always seemed to me essentially senile—gray-haired and sedate. And so I devoted myself to the labors of youth, as did the youthful

George Moore; and when the first crocuses of the spring appeared, and the lilacs came forth, and the April primroses got into my blood, and the hawthorn sent forth its pink and white shoots, I sought the Luxembourg or the Tiergarten or the Prater. Why, indeed, I thought, should spring come to London? Why should Henley, an Englishman, have called Spring "the wild, sweet-blooded, wonderful harlot"? And why should the year's first crocus have brought him luck? Had he indeed lain mouth to mouth with spring in London? Perhaps. But I doubted him. Therefore, before the lavender appeared, I was beyond the Channel.

But last spring I met the girl in the flat below me. Her name was Elsie—Winwood, I think. Of one thing, however, I am sure: she had cold gray eyes and auburn hair—an uncanny combination; but she was typical of the English girl, the girl who had been educated abroad. This girl and I came face to face on the stairs one day.

"Why do you always leave London at the best time of the year?" she asked me.

"I am young," I confessed. "In the spring I live by night, and one may only sleep in London at night."

"But you do not know London," she told me.

She smiled intimatingly and disappeared into the gloom of her studio.

That night I thought of Arthur Symons's "London Nights." Nobody in any city in the world had more subtly caught the spirit of youthful buoyancy, the spirit of romantic evanescence, the spirit of midnight abandon. Could it be that he was but a "poseur," a dealer in false words, a concocter of the nonexistent? Did the eyes of dancers never gleam in his? Did Renée never issue forth from that dim archway where he waited? Did Nora never dance upon the pavement? Was Violet but the figment of a poet's dreams? And was that painted angel, Peppina, a mere psychic snare? Could any man—even a poet—write as he did of Muriel at the Opera if there had been no Muriel? It seemed highly improbable. Finally I decided

that, ere departing for Reine or Anna or Bianca, I would sally forth into the night of London and see if, after all, romance did not lurk in the darkened corners.

At first I started without a guide, trusting to my own knowledge of the city, intending to follow up vague rumors to which I had lent but half an ear. Later I equipped myself with a guide—not a professional guide, but a man of means and of loose morals, a young barrister in whose family were R.A.'s, M.P.'s and K.C.'s.

"Shall we see it all?" asked Leonard.

"All," I replied. "From the high to the low."

We set forth. We were visions of sartorial loveliness. From a short distance we looked as much alike as two broiled lobsters. Our silk hats were from Heath's, our evening clothes from the same Bond Street tailor. The wings of our collars lay back in the same precise manner. Our white gloves were bought over the same counter. Our overcoats were lined with the same black "farmer's satin." We were both in good form, thereby looking exactly alike. Furthermore, I was at peace with the world. Two quarts of *Löwenbräu* and a masterfully cooked dinner from the Trocadero lay comfortably somewhere within me. The faint lingering aroma of Russian *kummel* hovered about my gums. A fragrant cigarette added the final touch of hedonistic comfort. . . . It was eleven o'clock, and the theatergoers were swarming in the Strand. We were heading for a great arch of incandescent light.

I was beginning to be disappointed. Visions of the dark-eyed Reine, in veils of mauve and orange, silhouetted against the synchromatic scenery of the Marigny swam before my eyes. I gave vent to a cavernous yawn. I had often had supper at the Savoy. But such a performance was not my idea of romance. I had never considered that luxurious dining room in the light of adventure. But with Leonard's suggestion I entered and found that, when the mental lenses are focused correctly, it in truth possesses much of that same gorgeousness

THE SMART SET

and lavish spirit which no doubt invested the banquets of Belshazzar.

Thus begins the night romance of London:

SOUPER.

Œufs de Pluvier
Consommé Double en Tasse
Filet de Merlan à l'Anglaise
Pommes Nature
Caille Cocotte Arménienne
Buffet Froid
Salade
Petite Glace Parisienne
Friandises

This is arbitrary, however. On the crested bill of fare we learn that there are other things to be had, but that they must be ordered *à la carte*. Glancing down the mammoth card we begin reading such items: *Saumon Fumé*, *Pigeon Cocotte Bonne Femme*, *Rognons Sautéés Champignons*, *Caille Royale aux Raisins*, *Tournedos Sauté Mascotte*, *Noisette d'Agneau Fines Herbes*, *Poussin de Hambourg Vapeur*, *Médaillon Ris de Veau Colbert*, *Terrine de Bœuf à la Mode Glacée*, *Su-prême de Chapon Jeannette* . . . and so on, almost indefinitely. I saw nothing in the fact—not had I seen anything in the fact—that the menu contained not one English word; but later in the week these affectations of French dishes became highly significant. They were really the symbol of London's night romance. They were the tuning fork which gave the pitch for London pleasures. For romance and gaiety in London are grafted to an otherwise unromantic and lugubrious hulk. All joys in that terrible city are lugged from overseas, and, in the process of suturing, the spontaneity has been lost, the buoyancy has disappeared, the honesty has vanished.

But no people can be without romance. No nation can withstand forever the engines of repression. Not all the moral lawmakers of England have succeeded in stamping out the natural impulses. Hypocrisy, that great mediator, sits into the game and stacks the cards. There is no more sensuous dining room in the world than the Savoy. There is no more impressive vision of human beings in the primitive act of eating than can be gained from the top of

the stairway which leads into that great double room. And nowhere on earth is there a more cosmopolitan gathering than sits down to the Savoy supper when the theaters are over. Here at least is visual romance; and when we inspect the people at closer range we glimpse a more intimate romance. One catches snatches of conversation from a dozen languages within the radius of hearing. Here is modern civilization at apogee—the final word in luxury—the *dénouement* of spectacular life. Go to the Aquarium in St. Petersburg, to the Adlon in Berlin, to the Bristol in Vienna, to the Café de Paris; go wherever you will—to Cairo, to Buenos Aires, to Madrid—the Savoy at the supper hour surpasses them all. From the pantalooned giants who relieve you of your outer garments to the farthest table in the room where the great windows overlook the Embankment Gardens, there is not one note to mar the gorgeous *ensemble*.

But we must not tarry too long amid the jeweled women, the impeccable music and the subdued conversation of the Savoy. In fact, it is not possible to linger. No sooner have we hastened through the courses of our supper and started to sip a liqueur than we are suddenly plunged into darkness. A hint! A warning! A silent but eloquent reminder that the moral man must hasten to his bed, that midnight is upon us, that respectability demands immediate retirement. When the lights come on again there is a gentle fluttering of silken wraps, a shuffling of feet, a movement of chairs. The crowds, preparing to depart, are obeying that lofty English law which makes eating illegal after twelve thirty. If you tarry after this signal for departure, a Parisian born waiter taps you gently on the shoulder and begs of you to respect the majesty of the law. Within ten minutes of the darkened warning the dining room is empty. Liqueurs are left undrunk. Ices are deserted. Half-consumed salads are abandoned. Out into the waiting taxis and limousines pours that vast assemblage. In fifteen minutes an atmosphere of desolation settles upon the streets. The day is ended—completely,

finally, irrevocably. The moral subtleties of the fathers have been sensed and obeyed. Virtue snickers triumphantly.

"And now?" I demand of my companion.

"S-s-s-h!" he warns. And, leaning over me, he pours strange and lurid information into my gaping ear. "Now," he whispers, "to the Supper Clubs, the real night life of London—wine, women, song and dance."

There is a mystery in his mien. And, obeying the warning of an admonishing finger, I silently follow him into a taxicab. A low, guttural order is given to the driver, the import of which is shielded from the inquisitive world by my companion using his hands as a tube to connect his mouth with the ear of the chauffeur.

I had heard of these supper clubs, but they had meant nothing to me. I rarely ate supper and detested clubs. Their literature which frequently came to me had left me cold. But, as I was carried in the taxicab through dark alleys and twisted streets, certain intimations in these printed invitations came back to me with a new meaning. Lest the iniquity of the London pleasure seeker be underestimated, let me supply you with the details of one of these supper club circulars. I will not tell you the name of the club: it has probably been changed by now. No sooner do the police put one club out of business (so far as I can see, merely to gratify the demand of the moralists that all sinners be flogged in public) than it changes its name and reopens to the old membership. Let it be noted here that in order to eat or drink in London after twelve thirty at night you must be a member of something; and to become a member of a London supper club is not so easy a matter as one might imagine. Traitors are forever worming their way into such societies, and the management exercises typical British discretion in selecting the devotees for its illegal victimizing organization. The club of which I speak, and whose circular—a masterpiece of low cunning—lies before me, has its headquarters on a street so small that in giving the address to even the most

erudite of London geographers it is necessary to mention two or three larger streets in the neighborhood.

The object of this club, it seems, is "to cultivate a form of art previously unknown in England—the Cabaret." A noble and worthy desire! But in the next paragraph we learn that this artistic uplift does not begin until eleven thirty P.M.; and by reading further we note the implication that it ceases at one thirty A.M., at which hour the cultivation of this unknown art—the Cabaret—is supplanted by a Gipsy Orchestra, to say nothing of the International Minstrels. Farther on we learn that once a month the club gives a dinner to its members, and that this dinner is followed by a "Recital Evening" in honor of and "if possible" (Oh, subtlety!) under the direction of Lascelles Abercrombie, Frank Harris, Arthur Machen, T. Sturge Moore, Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats. (Note: Although during the last year I have supper-clubbed incessantly whilst staying in London, I think, in all justice to the above-mentioned illustrious men, that it should be stated that not once have I had the pleasure of being personally directed by any one of them.)

One evening during the month, so runs the forecast, will be devoted to John Davidson (I missed that evening); one to Modern Fairy Tales (I somehow missed that evening also); another to Fabian de Castro and "Old Gipsy Folk Lore and Dance" (Alas, alas, that I should have missed that evening, too!). But this loss of culture, so far as I personally was concerned (and others, too, I opine), was not accompanied by any physical loss: that is to say, the statement on the manifest that during the performance there would be available "suppers and every kind of refreshment" is eminently correct, and veracious almost to the point of fault. Even when the performance was not given—as seemed always to be the case—there was no cessation in the kitchen activities. Suppers there were and, what is more to the point, every kind of refreshment.

The most important item on this manifest I have saved until the last.

There is in it something of the epic, of the beyond, of the trans and the super. I print it in capitals that it may the better penetrate:

NO FIXED CLOSING HOURS.

Such is the unlucky star under which I was born that I have escaped at these clubs all of the artistic and cultural performances. When I have attended them no light has been thrown on the Drama, Opera, Pantomime, Vocal Music, or "such delicate Art of the past as adapts itself to the frame of an intimate stage, and more especially all such new Art as in the strength of its sincerity allows simplicity." Nor has it been my luck to be present during a production of "Lysistrata," by Aristophanes, or "Bastien et Bastienne," by W. A. Mozart, or "Orpheus," by Monteverde, or "Maestro di Capella," by Pergolese, or "Timon of Athens," by Purcell. Nor have I been present when an eminent technician has rendered Florent Schmitt's "Palais Hanté," or Arnold Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire." All of which are booked for production or rendition. And yet I cannot feel that my money has been entirely wasted. It has bought me "every kind of refreshment," and catering by Frenchmen, and the company of lovely ladies—ladies who, I fear, are more familiar with the works of Victoria Cross than the works of Aristophanes, and whose ears are attuned to the melodies of Theodore Moses-Tobani rather than to the diabolical intricacies of Schoenberg's piano pieces.

Let us indulge ourselves for a moment in what is known to ritualists as a responsive service, thus:

Q.—What is a Supper Club?

A.—A Supper Club is a legal technicality—a system whereby the English law is misconstrued, misapplied, controverted, disguised and outdone. Specifically, it is a combination restaurant, café and dance hall, the activities in which begin at about one A.M. and continue so long as there are patrons whose expenditures warrant the orchestra being retained and the electric lights being left on. A Supper Club is usually downstairs, decorated in the

cheap imitation of a grape arbor, furnished with small tables, comfortable wicker chairs, suave and sophisticated waiters, an orchestra of from six to ten pieces and a small polished floor for purposes of dancing. Supper Clubs are run to meet every size of pocketbook. There are those whose patrons do not know the titillating effects of champagne; and there are those where the management serves no other form of febrifuge. Club members naturally need no introduction to one another, with the result that such formalities are here entirely dispensed with. In the better grade Supper Clubs the ladies are not admitted unless in evening dress, while at other establishments even such sartorial formalities are not insisted upon. The object of a Supper Club is to furnish relaxation to the tired business man, profits to the management, usfructs to the police and incomes to the lady patrons. The principal activities of a Supper Club are (1) drinking; (2) dancing; (3) wooing.

There you have it. In the Astor Club (Or is it the Palm Club? Or has the name been changed since spring?) one finds the higher type of nocturnal rounder. Evening clothes are obligatory for all. Champagne and expensive wines constitute the only beverages served. The orchestra is composed of very creditable musicians; and the lady patrons, chosen by the management by standards of pulchritude rather than of social standing, are attestations to the good taste of the corpulent and amiable Signor Bolis, owner and director. The men whose money pours into the Signor's coffers are obviously drawn from the better class of English society—clean-cut, clean-shaven youths; slick and pompous army officers; prosperous-looking middle-aged men who, even at a supper club, drop but little of their genteel dignity. On my numerous visits to this club I failed to find one member who did not have about him in a marked degree an atmosphere of deportmental distinction. Even during those final mellow hours, when the dawn was sifting through the cracks of the windows above-stairs, there was little or none of that

loud-mouthed boisterousness which follows on the heels of alcoholic imbibitions in America. Surfacely the Astor Club is an orderly and decorous institution, and so fastidious were the casual "good evenings" between the men and women that only the initiated would have guessed that ere that meeting they had been strangers. Even under the protection of membership and the police, the Englishman does not know how to laugh. He is decorous and stilted during the basest of intriguing.

I had become a member of the Astor Club after as much red tape, investigation and scrutiny as would have been exerted by a board of the most exclusive social club. I had signed my full name, my address and business, beneath which had been appended the names of two of my sponsors. I had had a blue seal pinned beneath my coat lapel and an engraved card sewn in my chemise. After which precautions and rigmarole, I was admitted each evening by the gorgeous St. Peter in red zouave breeches and drum major's jacket who guarded the outer portal.

Have I given the impression that, once inside, I assumed virtues which ill became me; that I sat apart and watched with critical eyes the merriment around me? Then let that impression be forever blasted. I am not a virtuous man according to theological standards. I have been a hardened sinner since birth. I gamble. Beer is my favorite drink. It has been flatteringly whispered into my ear that I dance beautifully. I read Cellini and Rabelais and Boccaccio with unfeigned delight. I am enchanted by the music of Charpentier and Wolf-Ferrari. I smoke strong cigars. And I do not flee at the sight of beautiful women. In short, I am a man of sin. Born in iniquity (according to the moral fathers), I have never been regenerated. Therefore let me admit that the spirit of the vice crusader was not mine as a member of the Astor Club. I spent many a delightful half-hour chatting with Héloïse Dessault, formerly at Fouquet's in the Champs Elysées; with Mizzi Schwarz, onetime frequenter of the Café de l'Europe, in Vienna; with

Hedwig Zinkeisen, of Berlin's Palais de Danse. . . .

Here is a characteristic thing about the London supper club: the majority of the girls and—to England's shame, let it be noted—the more attractive girls are all from the Continent. Without these feminine importations I doubt if the supper clubs could be maintained. At the Musical Galleries—a third rate supper place run by the Musical and Theatrical Club at 30 Whitfield Street, near Tottenham Court Road, W.—I was approached and greeted by a little French girl, whose knowledge of English was almost as limited as is my knowledge of Russian.

But I was forgetting Elsie Winwood, and to forget Elsie in this shameless chronicle would be disloyalty. At the Astor Club one evening I met her. I realized then what that intimating smile had meant when, the week before, she had met me on the stairs. I thereupon forgot Leonard, and visited the night debaucheries of London in the company of the gray-eyed, auburn-haired Elsie. I have every reason to believe that ere I sailed back to America I had sounded the depths of London's iniquities. By stealth and copious bribing, plus the influence of my fair companion, I found that, though it was difficult, it was nevertheless possible to eat and drink and dance in London till dawn. Yet at no place to which we went could I find anything unlike any other city in the world—the only difference being that in London one must act surreptitiously, while other cities permit all of the London indulgences openly. Surely the night life of London is innocent enough! Why membership in expensive clubs is necessary in order for one to enjoy it is a question to which only British logic is applicable. The searcher for thrills or the touring shock absorber will find nothing in London to rattle his psychic slats. Even the professional moralist, skilled in the subtle technicalities of sin, can find nothing in England's capital to make him shudder and flee. The chief criticism against London night life is that it is hypocritical, that it is sordid, because it is denied and indulged

in subterraneanly. The hypocrisy of it all is doubly accentuated by the curious fact that the British public permits trafficking in the promenades of its theaters, such as even New York has balked at these many years. I refer to such theaters—called “music halls,” that they may be distinguished from the smaller houses in which the serious drama is produced—as the “Alhambra,” in Leicester Square; the “Empire Theater of Varieties,” also in Leicester Square; the “Palace Theater of Varieties” on Cambridge Circus in Shaftesbury Avenue; the “London Pavilion” in Piccadilly; and the “Hippodrome” at the corner of Cranbourn Street and Charing Cross Road. At these theaters, equipped with numerous and eminently available cafés, women, frail and fair, sit and walk about on the promenades and generously waive introductions when the young gentlemen evince a desire to speak to them. But there is no romance here. These promenades are even without illusion; so we will pass down the velvet stairs out into the street.

There are two night restaurants in London which should be mentioned here. Let what little fame they may attain from being set down in these pages be theirs. They more nearly approximate to youthful whole-heartedness than any institutions in the city. Perhaps this is because they are so distinctly Continental, because they are almost stripped of anything (save the language spoken) which savors of London and the British temperament. They are the Villa Villa, at 37 Gerrard Street (once the residence of Edmund Burke), and Maxim’s, at 30 Wardour Street. Their reputations are far from spotless, and English society gives them a wide berth. Because of this they have become the meeting place of clandestine lovers. Here is genuine laughter and the wayward noise of youth. Nine out of every ten of their patrons are young, and four out of every five of the girls are pretty. Music is continuous and lively, and they possess an intimacy found only in Parisian cafés. Do I imply that they are free from sordidness and commercialism? They are not. Far from it. There is

no night life in London entirely free from these two disintegrating factors. But their simulacrum of gaiety is far from obvious. When the fifteen-minute warning for evacuation is given a good-natured cheer goes up, and a peal of laughter which shakes the chandeliers and drowns out the musicians. The crowd at least sees the humor of the closing law, and, being unable to repeat it, laughs at it. In the Villa Villa and Maxim’s hands meet lingeringly over the table; faces are near together; and a public stolen kiss is not a rarity. When the doors of these restaurants are locked on a deserted room, the exiles do not go decorously and dolorously home. In another hour you will see many of the same couples dancing at the supper clubs.

Here we are again in Signor Bolis’s establishment—which means that we have made the round. . . . Elsie is yawning. I, too, am tired of the dance and sick of the taste of champagne. I motion the waiter and pay the bill. I draw Elsie’s long coat about her, and we pass out into the clear London night. We walk home circuitously—down Cranbourn Street and into Charing Cross Road where it turns past the National Gallery into St. Martin’s Place. Through Duncan Street, we enter the Strand, now almost deserted save for a few stray figures and a hurrying taxicab. We then turn into Villiers Street, and in a few minutes we are on York Terrace overlooking the Thames Embankment. The elm trees and the beeches stand about like green ghosts in the pale night. At the edge of the water Cleopatra’s Needle is a black silhouette. We should like to walk through the Gardens in the starlight, but the formidable iron gates are locked against us. So we turn up Robert Street onto Adelphi Terrace. We lean for a moment against the railing overlooking the shadowy quietude of the Thames. Elsie’s hand is warm on my arm, and as I feel her breath against my cheek, I sense for the first time the true romance of London, which is also the romance of all the world—the romance of youth and the kisses of girls and the illimitable solitude of night.

AN EGOIST

By W. L. George

W. L. George stands prominently as one of the leaders of the younger English realists. Three of his novels are known to the discriminating reading public of this country—"The Bed of Roses," "The City of Light" and "Until the Day Break." In the present story you will find that same bleak power which is exhibited in his books. There are few writers today of more individual literary attainments than Mr. George, or whose work is more significant of the healthy tendencies in contemporary English literature.

CHARLES WEST stood on the steps of Romano's, and for a moment looked abstractedly at the procession of motorcars and motorbuses among which a very few horses drew their loads. It amused him to think that they should stream with such apparent endlessness toward the west, while no equivalent current flowed toward the east.

It seemed as if central London were emptying herself, as if her gigantic heart were regularly propelling the blood of her unwieldy body through the interminable network of streets and roads which are her veins and arteries. Soon the great heart itself would be at rest, the restaurants closed; the conveyances would grow less, and those mobs which now shouldered each other on every pavement become groups, then dwindle into twos and threes and isolate men and women hurrying toward their homes, until the deepest night fell upon those few who wandered aimless because homeless. For it was half an hour after midnight, and all about him the lights were growing dim as the centers of gaiety, expelling their devotees, put on their nocturnal shroud of silence. The minutes elapsed as Charles West witnessed the everlasting prodigy of the great city retiring to her rest. At his feet the pavement glistened black as the wet back of a seal, for it had been raining, and there still was in the humid air a suggestion of water and of cold which

made him draw his overcoat closer about his shoulders. Indeed, the cold seemed to nip through him, so that he walked down the steps quickly, and he also, following the common impulse, began hurriedly to walk along the Strand.

Already when he reached Trafalgar Square the night had properly come, for here were no lights in the houses save ahead of him in Pall Mall, at those windows where the clubs maintained their sober revelry, and West had the sensations which always assailed him when the world seemed to fall away from him and to show him to himself, a passionate, wrong-headed, idealistic atom suddenly aware of its place in that mysterious combination that is the earth because so far apart from the other atoms as to be removed from the scope of affinity. At this hour the world seemed fantastic, unreal as a stage when the play has been played, when the woods and the castles are paper and cloth, and the heroine, free at last from the villain, puts on her goloshes.

It was in the Haymarket he stopped again, a tall, slim figure somewhat narrow in the chest, gazing with vague eyes at the theater before him, which was already shuttered. There was little to read in his good-looking but rather weak face: his features were small, almost insignificant; his high, white forehead promised an energy which was belied by the receding weakness of his chin. Such

redemption as there was in his blue eyes, whose color was commanded by the curly yellowness of his hair, was not such as to fit him for the battles of this life, but marked him out as one of the wistful and tender who succor the wounded on battlefields where others have fought. He sighed, and the quality of the sigh was the quality of hopelessness, as if the man were face to face with problems too big for him, or the key to them too heavy for his hands to lift. As he stood, patrolling policemen passed him, threw him inquisitive looks; a small, indescribably dirty boy vainly offered an evening paper to his unseeing gaze, and the women of the town, strutting by like peacocks, lifting high their narrow skirts as they flaunted their poor moist finery, wasted no time upon him, for now again the rain was coming, and quite mechanically, like a beast that seeks shelter, West moved into the mouth of a little alley, half dark and protected by the overhang of the buildings.

There his vague thoughts did not leave him; indeed, they became clearer; he grew conscious of his unreality in the midst of an unreal life, of a life where people were doing things they did not want to do, because they had to, or because they had done them before, or because they did not know what they wanted to do. He saw life as a round of mechanical pleasures following on mechanical tasks, as a course between the gates of birth and death, a course without a prize.

He smiled at his own simile. Where were the realities—the realities of love and life? Not in his office from ten to six, nor in his loneliness from six to ten, nor in those drugs of theater, sport, rare conviviality and the still rarer adventure which outrages the name of love. So strongly did he feel this that he spoke aloud. "Reality—reality . . ." he said; "love and life. . . . Is there no life, and no love?" And then he started, for from behind him, through the darkness of the alley, a voice had murmured softly: "There is love."

Abruptly he wheeled about, trying to pierce the darkness from which the voice had come, and it was some moments be-

fore his eyes, habituated to the glare of the street lamp at which he had been gazing, could discern clearly the form of the speaker. He had time, therefore, while his eyes regained their power, to feel a thrill of excitement and curiosity, to wonder whether this were adventure indeed, alluring, mysterious and promising some incredible and unforgettable occurrence, for the voice was a woman's, pitched low, diffident, almost humble; and when at last he perceived that she was small and slim, clad in some shiny stuff, blue broché satin perhaps, with pleated white ruffles about her neck and wrists, that the smallness of her head was exaggerated by the tiny hat which moulded the shape of it and descended close over the eyebrows, his impression of something forlorn, isolate, was intensified: of her face he could see nothing but a whiteness, darkly stained by her mouth and eyes, and the light which fell upon these did not seem to make them glow.

After a moment of silence West spoke: "Is there love?" he said.

"They call it love," said the woman. There was another pause.

"They call it love," repeated West thoughtfully, "but surely there is only love, call it what you like. It is always the same thing when it's real."

"Ah," said the woman, "but isn't it difficult to know when it's real?"

"It's real when you think it's real," said West decidedly. "It's an illusion which ceases to be an illusion when you're taken in."

"I don't understand," said the woman. As she spoke she took a step forward, and West, seeing her more clearly, could not make up his mind whether she were pretty. She was young, between twenty-four and twenty-eight probably, very pale, so pale that the lip salve made her mouth seem purple rather than red, and the kohl on her lower eyelids gave immensity to tired eyes of a faintly greenish color. Over her ears he could see that her hair was thick, black and glistening, that it had a coarse quality that made him think of the oiled locks of some Red Indian. She stood before him, rather childish, as if she expected from him an explanation of his meaning, ready

to believe him, and yet at the same time shrewd, as if she were judging and appraising him.

In a moment West realized what she was, and a slight suspicion, a defensiveness, crept over him, for woman, always a little the enemy of man, becomes quite definitely so when moved by her profession to conquer him. So it was more coldly he replied: "Oh, well, it doesn't matter if you don't understand. What's the good of understanding things?"

The woman did not seem to feel the snub, or perhaps she was used to taking snubs calmly. Indeed, she smiled, and West had a horrible feeling that immediately upon that smile would follow the terrible phrase: "Where are you going to, saucy?" which would break the charm and send him wearily home.

But, instead, the woman said:

"No, I don't understand, but I suppose one can't live without love."

"Couldn't you live without it?" said West.

"I suppose I couldn't," said the woman, "and yet I suppose I do, for—" and she shrugged her shoulders toward the street. "It's not love, is it? Not as I used to think it was when I was a little girl. Or is it? What d'you think?"

For some moments West did not reply, but wondered what he did think, whether he knew what love was, whether he had ever known it, and whether the pitiful interplay of masculine desire and feminine greed was not the truth about which the poets of all the world had coalesced to lie.

"I don't know what love is," he said at last. "All I know is that I haven't got it." Then, suddenly: "What's your name?"

"Barbara Cane," said the woman.

"Where are you going?" said West.

"I don't know," said Barbara. "Anywhere until two or three o'clock, unless—" and again she shrugged her shoulders with a weariness that brought out of West all that muddled idealism, wrong-headed chivalry and inconsequent pity which made up his weakness and his charm.

"It's a hard life," he said.

"Everything's a hard life," replied Barbara.

"Well, I suppose it is; some things are harder than others, that's all. But, tell me, how can you bear it?"

The woman looked at him with a cynical little smile.

"One can bear most things when it comes to it," she said.

"But," he faltered, baffled by this curious philosophical attitude—"you're not like the others; couldn't you do anything else?"

"For instance?" said Barbara.

"Well," said West, "I don't know exactly . . . all sorts of things . . . typing . . ."

"I can't type."

"You could learn."

"I can't pay for a machine and my training."

"Oh—but—there's work in the shops."

"I used to do that, but I can't stand on my feet ten hours a day. I had to give it up because of that."

"You needn't always stand; to be a housemaid even might be better."

"I'm not strong enough, and I've got no character."

"But isn't there anything you know? Something you could teach?"

"They never taught me anything," said the woman, "so there's nothing I can do, not now."

West was not convinced, but his imagination did not yield him any suggestion as to what a woman can do whose brain has never been cultivated and who has not the strength to do manual labor.

"No," he said, reluctantly, "I suppose there's nothing."

"There's nothing," said the woman, "so I'll just go on." She smiled. "Go on cheerfully if I can; it makes things easier." Then, after a pause: "Well, I must be going."

She took a step toward him as if about to leave the alley, but, almost unconsciously, West put out his hand and laid it on her arm. She did not resist as he detained her, clearly indifferent, or perhaps faintly interested.

"Where are you going?" he asked again.

And, as before, she shrugged her shoulders toward the street and said:

"Anywhere up to two or three in the morning, unless . . ."

West hesitated. Then, quickly slipping his arm into hers, he said:
"It's not raining now; let us go."

II

THESE two met very often during the next few weeks. They met with a curious innocence, as if some of the oddity, the almost unnatural simplicity of their first encounter still clung to their relation. Barbara did not disappoint Charles West. He always found her calm, simple, perfectly ready to believe all he said, never anxious to question him. She took him as she found him, and sometimes this exasperated him, for he had the sensation that he was "just a man." The first time that this occurred to him he had a feeling of disquiet, for it crept upon him that to be "just a man" was exactly the position in which he ought to want to stand in regard to her. If he resented it, it must mean that he wanted to be more, to be not "a man" but "the man."

"What more do you want?" she said, when he tried to make her understand that he wanted her to delve into his personality. "Am I not nice enough to you?"

"You don't understand—you don't understand," said West, passionately. "I want—" and he clenched his hands together impotently.

What did he want? What could he want? This was preposterous, mad.

Barbara looked at him with calm green eyes, and a very slight movement of her hand showed that if they had not been in a public restaurant she would have touched him, thereby conveying something more subtle and more delicate than her untaught tongue could frame. The magic of the moment passed, and soon they were talking of the musical comedy of the day, but still it held them, and so much that West altered his intentions and left her suddenly at ten o'clock: he had to think.

And then it was that the picture of Barbara began to haunt him, that he saw a new grace and a new charm in her littleness, her helplessness and her quiet

courage. He realized her as caught in the web of a system. He had for her no sentimental sympathy, knew perfectly well that there was every chance against her having been thrust into the career she had adopted by circumstances which she could not have controlled. Doubtless, like the others, laziness, greed for pleasure had accounted for her downfall, but he was conscious, too, that she had paid very richly for her folly, for her early pleasures. This he thought was right and fair: it was right that she should pay, but it was splendid that she should have lost like a woman and paid like a lady.

He strengthened his impression of her quiet, almost philosophical personality as, little by little, their intercourse became almost daily. In some undefinable manner West found himself sliding into friendship, into an intimacy which Barbara furthered by dropping from time to time a hint of her early life, little phrases here and there, which showed that she had been well educated, others in which she alluded to a family whom she could not see again, and vague aspirations, too, suggestions that the life she accepted she merely accepted, but that on her mental horizon were still schoolgirlish dreams. They were dreams of peace, not dreams of adventure; she wanted to be secure, not to gamble. Too much a creature of the day to think much of the years to come, she was yet able to think a little wistfully of the next day, and West had ridiculous little pangs one afternoon, after he had taken her into the park and she had said that the crocuses which surrounded the base of a tree with their white, yellow and purple spears looked as if they had been woven into a garland. He began to be conscious of her, to need her.

Then, suddenly, one evening about seven o'clock, he saw her walking in the street with another man and holding his arm. Jealousy stabbed him through, like a hot sword, and in that moment he realized with abominable significance that which he had only known as a background to their relation: that he was not alone in her life, that there were other men; "other men," he murmured

hoarsely as he watched the couple out of sight, and found rising in him unreasonable fears, hatred of this big, prosperous, elderly man who had the right to touch her, her, Barbara—the soft, tender, patient Barbara—his Barbara. He walked on quickly, swinging his arms and muttering fiercely under his breath. He was almost hysterical in his weak anger, for this was not only jealousy—it was jealousy tainted and soaked with pity, with the temporary resolution of the weak, who can often overcome obstacles with their little strength because they are not strong enough to hold themselves back.

When he reached his rooms he was still in the thrall of what he had seen. He asked himself what he was going to do. For the first time in his life he examined himself, told himself he was a fool, a sentimental, unable to get anything out of life because he asked it too many questions. He saw himself as one doomed to failure; at thirty earning four pounds a week in an office he detested, unable to strike out on a new line, unable to use such life as he had to grasp at pleasure, at love. At love! Charles West's reflections took a different turn. If he could not grasp at love, perhaps love would come his way, and suddenly he was irradiated by a new consciousness, by a flood of sensation and impression that rushed in upon and drowned him. He realized a new, a real Barbara, who had listened to him, followed him, trusted him, who had made no terms with him but had always been grateful, who stood his humors and gave him naught but content.

"I ask for love," said West to his reflection in the looking glass. "Is this not love?" Nothing within him said him nay. "I must go to her," he said.

Half an hour later he was at Barbara's flat. As he pressed the bell he was thrilled with excitement, anticipation, as if he were conscious that something must now happen. She opened the door. Over the red silk dressing gown which she was wearing preparatory to the essential make-up of the evening, her thick hair fell in two straight ropes, one on each shoulder, black and glistening.

Between them her face smiled up at him; she looked childish and innocent.

"You look like a white flower," said West.

She smiled.

He threw both arms round her shoulders and drew her to him. He found that he was repeating hoarsely "Barbara, Barbara, my Barbara!" and that the intensity of his emotion was choking him, forcing unwilling tears to his eyes.

She did not reply, nor did she resist as he half led, half carried her into the sitting room. He sat her upon the sofa, and then held both her hands, and slipped down until he sat upon the floor at her feet. For a long time they did not speak; then the woman freed one hand and softly stroked his curly yellow hair. He did not seem to notice the caress, for he spoke harshly, almost angrily:

"Barbara, I saw you with a man an hour ago."

"Yes," she said, without emotion, still stroking his hair.

"Is that all you've got to say?"

"What can I say, Charlie? You know how things are."

"Yes, yes," he said angrily, "I know—of course I know; but I hadn't seen, I didn't understand. It can't go on; it mustn't go on."

The hand descended from his hair, gently caressed his cheek.

"What can I do, Charlie?"

"I can't bear it," said the man impetuously.

Barbara did not reply, but, bending down, lightly touched his forehead with her lips.

"Don't think about it, dear," she said; "you needn't trouble."

Suddenly West was on his knees, both arms about her waist.

"It must trouble me, Barbara; it must. It's I who cannot bear it if you can. You wouldn't do it if you could help it; I can't let you."

She looked down into his face:

"No, Charlie, I wouldn't. I thought I could, but—oh, what's the use of talking?"

"Ah!" cried West, exultant now.

"It's all different, isn't it? It's all different now, because you love me as I love you, Barbara. I love you; I want to marry you—will you?" The woman hesitated, and her eyes were hidden by her long black lashes.

"Can I?" she murmured.

The slight hint of opposition fired the man to action.

"You must—you must!" he cried. "And you will if you love me."

Barbara wound her arms about his neck, and, as she looked at him, for the first time he saw her blush.

"Yes," she said, seriously, "I love you."

III

THEY were married in April, and as the spring grew upon England and began to promise summer, West seemed to discover an almost mystic concordance between his life and the flush of the year. He did not feel bored now, though theirs was the smallest flat at the top of the most insignificant block in a southern London suburb. Barbara seemed to have the quality of radiating contentment, of giving her husband something of the quality, the quality of acceptance which had in former days made her tolerate the intolerable. She did not speak much, and even now West did not know exactly whence she came or what were the events which had brought her into the Haymarket on the cold, wet night on which he first met her. A few more hints had enabled him to piece together the idea of an imprudent first love followed by a desire for gaiety, for change, the usual tragedy of the light in mind. But it came to him that Barbara had perhaps gained more than she had lost. By her years of suffering she had gained strength, and by learning to suffer she had become fit not to suffer any more. She was always active: the small house seemed immaculately clean; the meals she cooked were sometimes unsuccessful, but they always had an oddity, such as a flower stuck in the middle of a frosted cake, or a custard tinted green, "just for fun," Barbara said. She had a curious, doglike way of

watching over him, of taking his clothes away mysteriously during the night and returning them before he left for the City, with their creases still warm from the pressure of a flatiron. As the year turned into summer West began to know himself as incomprehensibly happy, with a happiness that was half domestic and half esthetic, for Barbara contented instead of Barbara acceptant was awaking his admiration rather than his pity. Her face had filled out; innocent of make-up, her skin was white and clear, and a redness had come to her lips which no salve had ever given them.

She was never exuberant, but quietly, rather gravely gay, and she had odd moments of merriment when she coined words, called him "Towhead," and "Old Corkscrew Curls," ridiculous pet nicknames. And other moments, too, sudden, intense moments in the middle of the evening when he was reading or smoking without a thought for her. In those moments she would slide to the floor, bury her eyes in his chest, and murmur his name thickly again and again, without adding anything, shaken for the time by some intensity of feeling that could find better than in any words expression in the tense gripping of her hands. He loved her, not with a passionate, devouring love, but with a quiet, dominating depth of feeling. He was not conscious of her as one can be of some rare and beautiful conquest that fills the conqueror with spasmodic elations, but of her presence as an interesting and a natural fact. He took her for granted like the air he breathed, and if he felt no violence of joy in his ownership of her, it was because she had acquired over him a hold so complete and so subtle that he did not visualize himself as possible without her.

During his working hours he never thought of her, but one evening, when he returned and discovered that she was not in the flat, because she had gone out hurriedly to buy fruit which she had forgotten, he found himself embarrassed rather than anxious; he missed her as something that should naturally be there, that had no right not to be there, and the profundity of his egoism came

out as he clasped her in his arms as soon as she opened the outer door, for he did not only say, "My darling," but, as he held her, he repeated "Mine, mine!" She smiled on him, laid her cheek against his and whispered:

"Yes, yours," as if she were truly glad to sink herself in him, to be more servant to him than his servant, to be no more than an extension of his personality.

For she was content. Never once in those months had she regretted the life of uncertainty and adventure from which he had taken her. She did not miss its crude lights and heavy shadows; she did not want to go to theaters, to restaurants or even to the seaside or up the river. It seemed as if those places where men make merry had been soiled for her by the merriment in which she had taken part without choice. Adventure had brought her to the point where loneliness had brought her husband. She wanted nothing more than him and the peace he brought her.

Once she spoke of a child, and West smiled.

"We shall be getting old people," he said, "if one ever comes."

He stroked her cheek and she drew nearer.

"What better thing could we do," she said, "you and I, than just to grow old together?"

IV

IN November Charles West lost his job. The commission agency which employed him had long been unsteady, and the outbreak of the Balkan War, closing most of its markets, which happened to be in the Near East, gave it the last blow. One foggy, yellow morning West found himself with his fellows locked out from the office, on the door of which was posted a placard signed by the liquidator, stating that one week's wages in lieu of notice would be paid to each employee on application. He did not take it lightly, for the four pounds which jingled in his pocket represented the bulk of his funds. In earlier days he had lived carelessly, aimlessly, having no thought of marrying. He had indulged himself

in unsatisfactory ways, in books, theaters, some foreign travel, adventures which, though costly, were unsatisfying. He had saved very little in his attempt to get something out of a life in which there was so little, and then Barbara had come, blessed but costly, too. The furnishing of their flat had done more than absorb his resources, for there was a hire purchase agreement on which every month a pound had to be paid, and there were other ridiculous remains of his aimless past, small monthly sums to be paid on a gramophone, now out of order, on an encyclopedia which littered a corner of the sitting room, and there was his life insurance, the one thing that must at all costs be maintained if Barbara were to be saved from a life the thought of which drove the hot blood to West's ears.

Barbara did not take it lightly, either, but she did not take it so tragically, for she was better accustomed than he to the ups and downs of life which, for her, had been very like a switchback. She listened to the end of his story, noted its points as if she were trying to extract from it some consolation, as if concentrated upon him rather than upon it, as if searching the personality of the man she loved; and characteristically enough she said:

"Oh, don't worry, Charlie; you'll find another job; you'll be all right, even if it's difficult for a bit; you'll get through."

West did not notice that throughout she said "you" and not "we." He was too sunken in his affairs and his despairs to notice such delicacies. He had that night but one desire: to be reassured, to be comforted, to lay his head upon her gentle bosom; and Barbara comforted him, for her husband was that child which every woman has upon her wedding day.

Charles West went out to look for work, at first hopeful enough, animated by the quiet confidence of his wife, who every morning bade him a smiling farewell and prophesied with indomitable optimism that he would return in the evening with a salary larger than his previous one. As the days went on and he found everywhere that he was turned away, his mood alternated between a

hopelessness which was enough to discourage any prospective employer, and a fierce, dogged determination which was hysterical rather than resolute. In one of the former moods he refused to get up one morning, declaring that it was no good, that they might as well take a dose of laudanum, both of them, and be done with it.

Barbara sat at his bedside, made him tea at intervals, and patiently tried to arouse his interest during the day by reading out aloud, first the newspaper, then a chapter from a novel; but she found that the best repose was given her dear weakling when she slipped her arm under his head, pressed his face into her breast and rocked him in her arms. She would have sung him lullabies if she had known any.

On another day West returned disheveled, almost wet through. For a whole month, every day, he had been answering advertisements, tramping the town at the behest of agencies, and now, with a sort of despair, he had conceived the mad plan of applying at every office in a large building in the City. He had done so, and forty times had been turned away that day without even the favor of an interview; but here again was Barbara, confident, equable, ready to pour out for him the narcotic philter of her love.

They changed their last golden coin, and Barbara, prudent general, began to ration her man, to devise cunning dishes where the potato and the loaf masqueraded as meat with the help of gravy. West did not notice it; his nerves were going; the strain upon him was mental rather than physical. Unlike Barbara, he had always known what tomorrow would bring, and not to know was more than he could bear.

The payment for furniture was not met, and a threat came that the furniture would be seized by the company. West was struck down by the new realization that he had hardly anything to pawn. The premium for life insurance became due; it was not paid; then the fourteen days of grace began to run out one by one, and, as every one of them went, a new horror oppressed the man,

for soon accident or disease might leave Barbara unprotected. His Barbara—his woman.

One day he seriously conceived the plan of letting himself fall in front of an engine, ending his own pains and procuring the security of the woman he owned. But the weak are too weak to die; it is only the strong that dare to. So, head toward the ground, Charles West continued to tramp the town, to apply now for any and every post that might be open, no longer for chief clerkships, but for messengers', doorkeepers' jobs. He failed, for he was too slim, or too young, or too old.

One night the man came home with a chill. The next day he had pneumonia, and for three weeks, in the intervals of delirium and of coma, he had a vision of a sweet, white face, long-drawn, with immense green eyes ringed with purple. The face that bent over him interposed among his dreams, and toward which he perpetually extended his hands, to which he cried out not to leave him because he needed it, it was his, his property. He recovered, and curiously enough, for several days, until he was strong enough to get up and walk about the room, he asked Barbara no question. He told her that she looked thin and worn, then returned to his bed. Two or three days later, late at night, just as Barbara was about to undress him, he stared straight into her eyes and said:

"How long have I been ill?"

"Four weeks."

"How have we lived?"

"I surrendered the insurance policy for you; you signed the paper, but you don't remember; and I sold my jewelry."

"Oh! What are we going to do now? Is there anything left to pawn or sell?"

"No," said Barbara.

West's eyes roved about the room as if he were looking for something with a value. At last his eyes rested upon her hand, and there remained a while: he was looking at her wedding ring. Barbara's eyes followed his, and with a nervous movement she clasped both hands behind her back.

"No, Charlie," she murmured, "not that; I—I'll want it."

"Want it?" said Charlie, as if he did not understand.

"Yes," said the woman reluctantly, "I—I—" Suddenly her tongue was loosened. "Oh, Charlie, what's the use of thinking it can be otherwise? You've got to live; I can't let you die; I must do something."

"Do something," said West doubtfully. "Yes—perhaps; I can't. I wonder what you can do?" he added, drawing his hand across his forehead. "Let me see; what do women do? Oh, yes, typing."

"I can't type, Charlie."

"No, but you could learn."

"We can't pay for a machine and my training, Charlie."

"But," cried the man, in the irritable tone of the invalid, "there's lots of things; there's work in the shops."

"I used to do that, Charlie. I would again, but if I stand on my feet for ten hours a day I'll break up, and then I couldn't do anything more for you."

"No, no, of course not," said West. "You're not strong enough; you couldn't even be a housemaid, could you?"

A heavy weariness seemed to overwhelm him.

"There's nothing you know, I suppose," he said—"language—something you could teach?"

"They never taught me anything," said Barbara, "so there's nothing I can do."

They remained silent and face to face; then Barbara came to him, took both his hands.

"It's no good, Charlie. There's only one chance for us; you must let me take it."

"I don't understand," said the man. After a long pause Barbara said:

"I used to make a living before you found me, Charlie."

He looked incomprehendingly at the pale face, from the cheeks of which now stared two vivid red patches.

"You must live—you must live," the woman said feverishly. "I can't let you starve, my dear, my dear—I must go back."

"Go back! You mean—"

There was a long and heavy silence,

from which it appeared that the significance of the woman's words was but slowly penetrating into the man's brain. And as he understood he tried to believe that he did not understand. But, at last, the truth refused to be thrust away, seized him, invaded him, and as he was overwhelmed he was amazed to find that the horror was not the one he might have expected. To think that Barbara should return to the life from which he had rescued her, to suffer insult, privation, to be again a toy, yes, this filled him with a dull ache; but the terrible pain of the moment was other, bound up in the inconceivable complexities of his own weakness. "She is mine," he thought, "mine. I saved her, made her mine. She is more than mine; she is I. It is I she will degrade, degrade me to save me, disonor me while she saves me!" The fierce pride of the weak, impotent, sullen pride rose in him, and his cry surprised him when it came:

"Barbara!"

Oh, it was not horror, or pity, nor were there tears in the voice. His was a scream of rage, as if she had suggested that he should sell himself for her. It was rage that she should mock him by degrading herself. His eyes were dim, his throat constricted as he stood over her, enormous, swollen, as if he felt himself to be more than himself, more than all the world, as if no outrage could be cosmic enough to leave him out. Barbara had shrunk away from him, and stood with her hands clenched upon the back of the settee, so tight that her fingernails showed red and white zones. As she saw before her those wild blue eyes in the purplish face, she was filled with terror, forgetting even to pity this creature for whom she would readily die, for in her fear she saw him as a wild beast, and instinctively drew back as from the snarling fangs of some mad dog. But the shadow passed, and she saw him through the thick veil of his passion, her gentle, beloved deliverer, chivalrous, weak, unable to think because he, too, violently felt. She held out her hands; she tried to reason with him.

"Charlie, Charlie, don't you see? I love you—you're all I love—I can't let

you die! Dear, it's the only way—just for a little, until you're well again, just that you may live. It won't last long. Soon you'll be strong; I'll come back to you, only to you . . .”

She threw herself on her knees, seized his moist, cold hand.

“You'll be strong soon,” she murmured; “you saved me—let me save you. It's the only way; you want to live, Charlie, don't you? If you died you would lose me. Let me go, Charlie; let me go. . . .”

He snatched his hand away, drew it across his forehead.

“Ah!” he gasped. Then: “Go back—to that—my God!”

Again he drew his hand across his forehead. Suddenly he laughed. “I suppose you wouldn't mind.”

She did not reply, but all the color fled from her face, and she stared at him out of immense purple-ringed eyes that seemed to protrude from the chalk-white cheeks. She knelt in front of him still, trembling as if he had struck her.

“You wouldn't mind,” he repeated savagely.

“Not for you,” she whispered at last.

West seized her by one shoulder, dragged her to her feet.

“You shall not,” he growled; “you shall not. You're mine, mine. None other shall touch you.”

“You can't starve, Charlie,” she said, weak in voice, strong in purpose.

For a second he paused, but he was blinded, could not realize their respective positions; he did not see her—he saw only his woman.

“You shall not.”

“I must, Charlie; I must. Tomorrow they will take the bed from under you unless I—unless tonight . . .”

“You shall not go.”

Both hands upon her shoulders, he

forced her up against the wall, and she tried to shrink away from the convulsed face, the hot breath. She tried to move toward the door.

“Ah, would you?” A queer, maniacal ring had crept into West's voice. “You'd go to disgrace—to insult—to what I saved you from; you'd go back to where you came from—to infamy. But you can't, you can't; you're mine, you're me—I've got you, got you . . .”

The gripping fingers bit into her shoulders. He shook her, slowly, steadily, full now of a mad delight and strong in his madness. She swayed, helpless in his hands, whimpering, feebly crying out his name: “Charlie—Charlie—don't!” as he swung her to and fro. But the purpose which animated her was stronger than herself. Still she tried to edge toward the door, hardly hearing his words: “My woman, my wife . . . can't do it . . . I won't . . . I can't . . .”

The repetition of his “my” and “I” seemed to give her strength, to make him more vital, more essential to her. She struggled to get free.

Then she knew rather than felt that he had struck her. They parted, trembling, dazed.

“You shall not go.”

“I must,” said Barbara mechanically, turning toward the door, her hand to her bruised cheek.

She fell to the ground as he leapt at her; she cried out as he lifted her, dragged her toward the window. He opened it. The cold air rushed upon her face.

“You shall not,” he growled; “I can't . . .”

“I must! I will!”

“Ah,” screamed West, “I—I—I . . .”

And as they fell, locked together, toward the distant stones, one cry tore the night:

“I!”



WHEN all's said, life still remains considerably more sensational than all the elinorglyns.

ON THE DEVIL'S STAIRS

By Guido von Horvath

SIMEON VIEUVICQ, the slim sheep-herder, came on a dog trot down the precipitous footpath that led from his grazing land on the majestic shoulder of Mont Seron toward the poor little village.

He darted into the hut that stood on the outskirts, high above the other cottages. With its brown roof and white-washed walls, it nestled against the gray rock like a tired pelican. It belonged to Catus Catenay, the poacher.

"Come, Catus, come!" panted the breathless little man. "Take your rifle—chamois! A herd of them up on the shoulder near Pic Beauvoic."

The stoically smoking Catus jumped to his feet and shook himself like a bear that had just crossed a creek. Powerful, gigantic, almost twice as tall as Vieuvicq was he. His early Roman face would have been handsome but for the hard, somehow sinister lines that engraved it. It was a face that had never expressed a smile.

He stretched his hand for the rifle on the wall, dropped a handful of cartridges in his coarse coat pocket, then growled: "Here we go!" Placing his bearlike hand on Simeon's shoulder, he gave a slight push. "Go ahead; I'll follow."

Simeon retraced his steps as light-footed as a deer, climbing with ease the path that crumbled and scrunched under the heavy poacher's feet.

They reached the forest, and Simeon turned away from the bald spot, leading Catus straight through the woods, over a path that was unmarked with familiar landmarks. An hour later they had left the echoing woods and, Simeon still in the lead, climbed on under the now scattered pines. The silence grew

more intense. A raven, disturbed in its retreat, flew up and filled the clear air with its "karr-karr." Catus took a deep breath, and in a low voice growled:

"How many, Simeon?"

The little man answered in a hardly audible tone: "Seventeen."

Catus jumped forward. Seventeen chamois here on the mountain, where one sees them but seldom, and then only a few at a time? His passion was aglow. Like a trailing hound, trembling from excitement, he ran forward, stopping again and again to wait for the shepherd.

They came upon a clearing. Far down in a bluish haze, they could see Lanslebourg. Before them rose the Monk's Pillar, gray and forbidding—a tower built by giants. They had to skirt this to approach the game.

Catus started on a detour that led across a broad slope toward Beauvoic Peak, but Vieuvicq did not follow. He stood hesitant, scratching his bushy head. Plainly he did not know what was the best to do. Finally he put his doubt in words:

"That won't do, Catus. You'll never get a shot at them that way."

The poacher returned on tiptoe, signalling for silence. Then he whispered in Simeon's ear: "The chamois have the sharpest of ears, Simeon—don't talk aloud."

"But their eyes are even sharper!" claimed the little man. "You never could approach them that way, Catus." He stretched out one arm. "Do you see those three lonely pines there?"

"Aye!" muttered the other.

"That is the exact spot from where I sighted them. My sheep are a trifle lower down."

"Well?" Catus's gaze and the movement of his hairy right hand finished the sentence—which way?

"I'll tell you—we could try the Devil's Stairs," answered Vieuvicq with an instant's crafty gleam in his small eyes.

Catus calmly shrugged his shoulder. "Too narrow," he commented.

Nevertheless Simeon insisted. "You just think so, Catus. Many's the time I have passed it with a young lamb over my shoulder. Besides, where it is really narrow, we can crawl over on our bellies."

"You are slender and small, Simeon," Catus said, with a complacent glance at his own immense form. "But just look at me." For a short moment it seemed as though Simeon's face was drawn into a belittling, sarcastic expression. Catus did not wait for him to put his thoughts into words. "*Mordieu!* Go ahead! I follow."

They reached the right corner of the Monk's Pillar by way of a short cut, and after a slight turn came the Devil's Stairs—a natural path that girded the great pillar, leading upward like a long stone serpent. At its widest part it measured four feet, but at one place the shoulder of a crawling man would hang out over the precipice, at the foot of which the stream, six hundred feet below, gurgled and jumped from rock to rock in its anxiety to reach the valley.

But the risk was worth while. The Devil's Stairs would bring them right above the grazing chamois; besides, they could not possibly be scented by the cautious animals. Had anyone observed their progress from the slope opposite, he would surely have compared them to two flies crawling up a gray, partially moist and mossy wall.

Catus's rifle was aglitter in the bright sunshine. An Alpine jay, attracted by the sight, fluttered about, wondering what this invasion meant; then, satisfied, it cut through the air over the silent valley, to vanish in the dark pine forest.

The poacher followed his slender guide silently, first walking, then crawling on all fours, and finally inching along on his belly, like a snake. He perspired

and his breath was short as he slowly squirmed over a stretch sixteen inches wide that was the most dangerous part of the stairs. This once passed, the path broadened out again. Simeon, already over this point, rose to his knees and turned.

"Wait, Catus! Hand me your rifle. You will cross this place more easily without it."

Without demur the poacher obeyed, then took a fresh hold of the rocky path, to worm cautiously forward. His great body seemed to stick to the warm stone while he made an almost imperceptible progress.

One second, then another; his shoulders were already somewhat freer on the broadening path. With a snarl Vieuvicq lunged forward. His face was ugly with a wild passion. The rifle was raised clublike in his right hand, but he did not strike. He shoved viciously at the prostrate man, prying him loose from the path . . .

Catus was gone. The narrow strip over which he had been squirming was empty. The silence of the valley was broken by falling stones as they struck and rebounded from the wall below.

Other sounds came: a short gasp, the dull thud of a soft mass in sharp contact with the wall; but Simeon Vieuvicq did not hear them. His terror-distorted face was ashen as he sank against the wall for support. His glassy eyes gazed into nothingness while he pressed Catus's rifle nervously to his breast. He felt the hair rise on his meager, pointed head. His ears were drumming so loudly that he was not sure whether he heard anything or not. Horrified, with chattering teeth, he listened. Was something moving on that wall below? Did he hear the dwarf pines rustle? And why were the rocks still breaking loose from the wall? All should be silent by now!

After many efforts, he flattened out and pushed his head over the rim and stared downward. He saw a wriggling, panting body six yards under him, making prodigious attempts to worm itself to a niche in the wall. Its fingers clutched at invisible roots and found a hold in minute crevices, and its toes seemed to

cling to nothing. Catus's protecting saints must have been near.

Vieuviq, as he watched the man whom he had wanted to destroy, realized sickeningly that he had misjudged his strength when he dislodged Catus from the path. He had slid over, instead of crashing downward. With wildly beating heart, Vieuviq leaned farther out, the better to see. Would he reach that ledge?

He was already sorry for what he had done. With the simple faith of the mountaineer, he murmured a prayer for his enemy's safety. Yes, Vieuviq wished that Catus would reach that niche on the mountain side. The force of his hatred had become exhausted; again he was the weak, repressed coward.

However, when he perceived that the poacher had gained the ledge, where he was out of immediate danger, the mad desire for vengeance leaped into a red flame again. His eyes were bloodshot and his lips foamed as he shrieked the trapped man's name.

"Catus! Catus!"

The giant Roman looked up. Stone hard calmness rang in his voice. "What do you want?"

"Catus! You—you—*cochon!* Dog! There were no chamois at all! I made that up to get you here, so I could throw you down the mountain side. Do you hear me? Do you hear me, you big dog? I have put you there where you are, and can you suspect why? Sure you do—*cochon!* You must know, you thief! So do I—everything! I know that while I watch my sheep you go to my woman!" He spat at Catus. "Don't you know that she is my wife and not yours?"

He panted in exhaustion, but his eyes gleamed dangerously. Catus was calm as he answered:

"Yes, you are right, Simeon. You have done as I would have done in your place."

Simeon was weak after his great passion, which had spent itself in words. He listened to Catus's words in naive admiration. He had always been an admirer of the bold, masterful and ruthless poacher.

"Catus, are you not afraid?"

"Have I ever been frightened, Simeon?"

The undersized shepherd's soul shrivelled; the killing force of jealousy cut deep ravines in his feelings. When he thought of his wife, he frenzied to shed blood. He clutched the rifle in sudden determination. Yes, he would shoot him. Then, when his thoughts adventured into the future and he saw that big body roll down, saw it brained on the rocks below, he shivered and pulled the Winchester back. In a whining voice, he cried despairingly:

"Catus, Catus! Why didn't you leave my wife alone?"

Catus shrugged his shoulder. "Leave her alone? *Mordieu*, Simeon, I never ran after her. She looked at me with her witch eyes in a way that no warm-blooded man could stand; I couldn't help going to her, Simeon." His voice was convincing, and his tranquillity was that of an innocent child.

Little Vieuviq nodded his head at Catus's words. He knew the witchery of his wife's eyes. "True, true!" he sobbed.

"*Mon Dieu*, Catus, I am sorry, so sorry for you! And you—have you no sympathy for me? Can you forgive me, Catus?"

"Have I not said that it is right as it is? I am not angry at you, not at all. Go home, Simeon—go! Leave me alone. When I grow tired of this hole, I can jump down, but now I want to think a little—and pray a lot. Go!"

"Truly, Catus? Can you forget it—could you forgive me and not think of revenge?"

"I have done so already."

"Listen to me, Catus! Would you—would you promise, swear on something sacred, that you will do one thing? You are in my power—will you?"

"Whatever you want from me, Simeon, is yours. Take it. I have not much time left, and will need nothing more."

"Catus, promise me—give me your most holy oath that you will never again speak to my wife, never even look at her. Will you do so much for me, Catus? Then I'll go and get ropes to save you."

Catus took his briar from one pocket and his embroidered pouch from another. The gay threads reminded him of the witch-eyed woman whose handiwork it was.

"The devil shall take my soul if I ever think of her again!" was his measured answer. "Go and ask her. I have not been near her for a long time. I have had all the opportunity I could wish, but, Simeon, I have had other things on my mind. I turned over a new leaf, Simeon, after much prayer."

Simeon listened eagerly, and the poacher finally pulled out his matchbox and lit his pipe.

"Not for this, or that, Simeon, but because I was going to marry. Ask Annette Bruillon about it."

"Annette?" cried Simeon. "You want to marry her? She is not a bad-looking girl."

"Not a bad-looking girl! Much better-looking than your wife," retorted Catus coldly.

"That is a lie, Catus!"

"However that may be, I like Annette."

"Thank God, Catus! Then you promise? Say so and swear, and I'll run for the rope. Have no fear; I'll save you."

"Fear! I don't know fear; but since you insist, I'll swear on anything you please. No need to be foolish. It is better for you and for me, too, that you get me out of this. The murderer might have leaked out. I see some lumbermen far below—they might have seen something, and that would have meant justice, Simeon, and the hangman."

Something cold ran down Simeon's spine.

"I'll be back as soon as ever I can, Catus. No one shall know about it."

Catus merely nodded his head and continued to gaze out over the valley.

Simeon Vieuvicq ran down the mountain as fast as he could, and the village was far. The sun had traversed from the eastern sky to the western by the time he reappeared on the Devil's Stairs.

Catus was still on the ledge, pipe in mouth, puffing contentedly, when the thin, sharp voice of the shepherd rang through the silence.

"Oh, Catus! Here is the rope."

"U-hunh!" mumbled the giant.

"Now listen! I'll loop the rope around a solid rock, then I'll throw the other end to you. Don't forget to fasten it around your waist; then you'll be safe. Climb, in God's name, and I'll help you all I can."

The stout rope was thrown down. Catus reached for it, and deliberately tested its strength. He bound it about his body, and without removing the pipe from his mouth, began to climb.

"Steady! Be careful!" shrieked Simeon in terror once, but the other, with the unconcern of a mountaineer, pulled himself up higher and higher.

"Now! Now!" moaned Simeon. His victim's head reached the path, and he grabbed the back of his shirt and tugged with all his puny strength. One more contraction of those powerful arms, one more vigorous kick of the long legs, and the poacher found himself lying on the Devil's Stairs. Slowly he regained his breath, with eyes closed, while Simeon stood over him anxiously.

Catus gazed at Simeon through half-closed lids for a moment, before he rose to his feet and cautiously stretched himself. His descending hands clasped themselves about the neck of the shepherd, who uttered one squeak of terror, as he was lifted high in the air. Another instant, and the miserable little fellow was tossed out into the valley.

Catus watched him turn over and over, then shoot down and flatten out on the rocks beside the gurgling stream.

With a shrug of his fine shoulder, Catus picked up his rifle. He entered the village with the setting sun, and walked directly to the door of Simeon Vieuvicq's hut.

"Simeon is dead; about two hours ago he fell down from the Devil's Stairs." This fact was stated without emotion.

The witch-eyed woman trembled as she cast a glance into Catus's deep, hellish dark eyes. What she saw warned her that questions would not be tolerated.

She put her arms about that strong neck. Catus patted her shoulder and gruffly said:

"I am hungry—let us eat!"

SHOWING MRS. VAN

By John S. Reed

PIERRE took me to call on Mrs. Van, at the Ritz. Her last name

I won't mention here; but she was a battlemented creature, literally studded with jewels, upon whose face the ravages of time had been repelled with no uncertain hand. She wore that hunted look of escaping from ancestry which so generally distinguishes aristocrats of the first generation. I gathered that she had a house at Narragansett Pier, a villa at Ormond, and a shooting lodge in the Berkshires.

When she asked us to show her Paris by night, Pierre and I stiffened perceptibly; only relaxing when the good lady admitted that she would foot the bills. So we took her to Montmartre and the Boul' Mich' and all the rest of it, and landed her at the hotel a little ahead of dawn, glowing with improper delight.

"Now, what can *we* do for *you*?" asked Pierre.

"There's the carnival at St. Cloud," I hazarded.

"The very thing," cried Pierre. "Sunday—"

"Then you come here for luncheon," insisted the good lady, embracing us both in a large coquettish smile.

"And the children?" asked Pierre.

"Oh, surely!" she answered, with the merest trace of disappointment.

"There's only one thing," observed Pierre cautiously. "We are, you know, poor students in the Quarter."

"Oh, of course! I understand," interrupted our Privy Purse. "Like tonight. I'll pay all the expenses. It will be *so* good of you."

"Not at all," said we with condescension. We kissed her hand, a proceeding which seemed to give her great pleasure,

and went back to the Deux Magots for breakfast.

Sunday was an opal day, swimming in a transparent mist, with tints of fire in the autumn leaves of the Tuileries. Up the soaring vista of the Champs Elysées, the Arc loomed ethereally.

"Wait till you see the children," Pierre had said, with a mysterious shake of the head. But I was not prepared for the two dazzling young goddesses that came forward so frankly to meet us. Ami, the eldest, a slender young Viking in blue, raised a pair of eyes to meet mine that were startlingly dark and deep; Margot was younger and less vivid. Then there was a fat male relation, who had assumed the monocle as a birthright upon landing at Fishguard. His conversation was Chestertonian, but his eye muscles had never been trained to hold the insignia of his rank; the monocle kept leaping out at every opportunity. It was fascinating to such an extent that we hung upon the monocle, seeming to hang upon his conversation. Under the warmth of our attention, he expanded into a glow of anecdote and paradox.

"Champagne," he remarked, apropos of the arrival of a cooler, "is the epitome of modern society—"

"Again," exclaimed Ami.

"The fifth time, Cuthbert," chimed Margot.

"—all bubbles and no taste," continued the F.R. serenely. "Like Reason. Now I like the primitive emotions. Feeling in contrast to Reason. Champagne versus Burgundy. Reason versus Feeling. Therefore Burgundy. Eh, what?"

"Eh, what!" echoed Pierre and I in chorus.

"Where did you read that, Cuthbert?" asked Mrs. Van skeptically.

"Nowhere," exclaimed the F. R., ejecting his eyeglass; "I made it up. Reminds one of Chesterton, doesn't it?"

"Rather Maeterlinckish, I think," I ventured.

"Ibsen," said Pierre.

"Perhaps, perhaps," admitted the *homme d'esprit*, in a satisfied tone.

"Oh, don't let us talk about books," cried Ami. "It's so stupid."

"Why, Ami!" said her mother severely. "I am surprised at you. Haven't I told you a number of times to be clever, even if it bores you? Don't imagine that you're in America. How do you ever think I'll get you married if you can't adapt yourself to your male environment?"

I touched Ami's foot under the table, and she smiled furtively. Charming smile—

But the Dreadnought was reminiscing.

"I knew a doctor once named Lung—"

"Oh, Cuthbert," cried Margot, "if you tell that story again I shall scream."

"My dear, delightful cousin," said Cuthbert, "a good story can never be abused. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," answered Pierre and I in ambiguous chorus.

"Especially with such a witty raconteur," interpolated Mrs. Van; and I suppose that is why Cuthbert paid the check.

"—whose name was Lung," continued the F. R., capturing his eyeglass. "And once I called him Dr. Liver, by mistake. Hee! Hee! Droll! You should have seen—"

"It makes no difference," said Pierre soothingly. "Any intestine would do."

"But—" explained Cuthbert.

"Oh, do save the explanation until we come back," urged Mrs. Van. "It's as good as another story."

So we left him alone—with the bill.

"How much will it be?" asked Mrs. Van, as we ambled through the Tuilleries.

"You'd better give me a louis," answered Pierre. "I'll spend it carefully." Pierre juggled the louis in his palm.

"I suppose a taxi—" he suggested.

"It might be a bit quicker," I hinted.

"Oh, do, mother!" cried both girls.

"Yes, do, mother," I collaborated gaily.

The good lady shot a venomous look at me. "We'll take the boat," she said acidly. Pierre frowned in my direction. I saw I had made a frightful break, so I dropped behind.

"Wouldn't you rather walk with my daughters?" she asked stiffly.

"Your daughters? Tell me, why this mystery?"

"Mystery?"

"It is ridiculous to tell the world that those are your daughters, when any discerning person would know you were sisters."

"Oh! Why—" She was actually blushing.

Oh, Pierre, you never knew the sacrifice that made your Roman holiday!

All about us that wise and gracious Paris held fête. Think of it, on Sunday—at home the gloomy nightmare of the week; here, a hilarious outpouring of people; cabs, boats, trams thronged with that inimitable crowd, equally ready to blague or start a revolution.

The Seine unwound before our tiny steamer, a splendid panorama of bridges and palaces, with splashes of autumn trees between.

"So you're going to be married," said I to Ami.

"So mother plans," she said, looking at me with those serene and disturbing eyes. "I—I don't know whether I—" She stopped and colored.

"What are you two talking about?" asked Mrs. Van, with suspicion.

"About you, of course," I smiled. Then to Ami: "To a foreigner?"

She nodded, with her face turned away.

"And you—how do you like these foreign men?"

"Hush!" she said in a low voice. "Don't let mother hear. They disgust me. They look at me in such a way—"

"How about Margot?"

"Engaged to Cuthbert—" she whispered.

My blood began to boil.

"Who's the man you're going to marry?"

"We haven't met him yet— Oh, be careful! Talk to mother. She's jealous—"

"And you mean to tell me—" I fairly shouted.

"What?" asked Mrs. Van with asperity.

I struggled frantically with my memory.

"We—er—were discussing your age—er—"

Thunder and lightning!

"My age?" in a rising crescendo.

"Yes—er—you see—" Ami pinched me viciously. "When your daughter told me of your age, I—ah—wouldn't, couldn't believe it."

The wrath had slipped over me and settled upon Ami. Pierre, who had been retailing his travels to Margot with Othello-like effect, paused aghast. I mopped my brow.

"And may I ask," said Mrs. Van sweetly, "what age she told you?"

I plunged: "Thirty!"

The sun shone once more, the birds twittered. All was more or less right with the world. Pierre applauded in pantomime.

"Great!" whispered Ami. "For heaven's sake, talk out of the side of your mouth."

"Oh! What is that funny house up there on the hill?" asked mother. "I know it must be historical."

"Rotten with it," I agreed. "I'm not very much up on French history, but Pierre—"

Pierre scowled. There was a pause.

"Oh, do—"

I heard him begin smoothly: "When Napoleon Premier had defeated Charles the Fifth at Poitiers, he brought Jeanne d'Arc to this chateau—"

"Why—why—why!" said I to Ami. "Why do you stand for it? Do you mean to tell me you like—"

"No," she breathed, "I hate it all. I hate Paris. I wish I were home—" Her lip quivered.

My mind was awhirl with chivalrous schemes. Imagination rioted. Elope-

ment—what if I could carry her off? It was monstrous!

"You are beautiful," I said with fervor, and meant it.

Mrs. Van touched me on the arm. It was like a Puritan destroying a cathedral.

"What is that funny man fishing for?"

"Oysters," I rasped, "but Pierre—"

"I beg your pardon," said Pierre with malice. "You are the Fish Commission." So I had to start. I never felt more like murdering a man than at that moment. If I could only have had a few minutes!

But we were there. The long aisle that leads down from the main gates was alive with people; the fête was almost over. Only a few booths remained open. Others were busy packing up, off to the winter fairs of Provence. I had never seen the gardens more beautiful. I had seen them in the summer, with the fountains playing; in winter when the snow carpeted the naked forest aisles; but today the fountains were silent, the flowers were fading, the fête was ended. Yet everywhere the soft light glanced through tapestried lines of trees upon a kaleidoscope of children, gendarmes, lovers and bourgeois family parties; laughing, tossing jests at each other, in a babel of horn-blowing and singing.

Pierre and I flanked Mrs. Van. The girls walked ahead.

"Isn't it disgusting," she said, "that all these dirty people are allowed in the gardens?"

"Yes," I agreed, thinking of various methods of poisoning.

"It all seems made for the pageantry of a court, for gorgeously dressed aristocrats."

I wondered where she had read it.

"Madame," said Pierre, oh, so obviously, "you are then in your proper frame."

She fell for it. "Flatterer!"

We climbed the great stairway. I thought and thought of some way to be alone with Ami.

"I'll tell you what," said Pierre vaguely: "let's all separate and each

two take a different avenue through the forest and meet here."

"Wonderful!" I shouted with unnecessary emphasis.

"And what will become of me?" said Mrs. Van. That ended it.

"We'll all go together," she went on with apparent cordiality, "one of you men on each side of me. *Ami, you walk with Pierre.*"

The italics are my own.

And so, with small-talk on our lips, and crime in our hearts, we wasted the rest of that glorious day. Tired at last, everyone sat down on the edge of a pool, where fat, important goldfishes scurried to and fro. The sun snuffed out behind the hills, and a faint chill steeled the empty sky. If we had to go back to Paris, it would be all up.

Pierre broke the silence. "I have the honor to invite you to dinner with us this evening. We will sit at a little table out in the square, and listen to the music."

"Oh, mother!" cried the girls. "Lovely!"

"I'm awfully sorry," said Mrs. Van, "but I have promised to dine with Cuthbert."

"How absurd!" I cried. "Here are thirteen francs left from the louis, and you won't accept our invitation."

"I wish I hadn't promised," said the good lady, "but you see—"

"Well, why not let the girls stay out here?" asked Pierre. "We'll bring them back right after dinner."

"Oh, really!" said Mrs. Van suspiciously. "That's quite out of the question. This is not America, you know. Why, I shouldn't *think* of leaving them unchaperoned."

"How did *you* dare to go with us the other night unchaperoned?" said Pierre.

"Where did you go, mother?" asked Margot naively.

"Never mind," said her mother, somewhat flustered. "Pierre, will you call a taxi?"

But there was no taxi. Only two ancient *voitures*, with unhappy-looking horses.

"We can't all get in one," said Mrs. Van. "Ami, you come with me, and

you, Pierre. The other two can come in the other—"

"Hold on," said Pierre. "That won't do at all. You told us yourself that both must be chaperoned. If we go that way, you might as well let us all stay to dinner."

"That's so, that's so," cried Mrs. Van. "Pierre, you come with me, and the other three in the other."

"Just as bad," answered Pierre. "Without a chaperon, God knows what might happen. He's a very seductive person, is my partner."

The good lady looked somewhat frightened and very much annoyed. She had wanted one of us at least. "Well, let the girls ride together."

"Sh-h! Sh-h!" whispered Pierre. "The cabby! The cabby!"

"The easiest way out of it is to let them stay to dinner," I remarked.

Mrs. Van trembled with rage. "All right!" she snapped. "The girls will both ride with me, and you two can come behind."

"Here's your money," said Pierre; "all except six francs which I shall keep to pay our *cocher*."

"Drive close to us in the Bois, Pierre," said the mother.

"With all my heart," said Pierre, with a bow.

As the carriage rolled off, we made frantic signals of farewell. Two handkerchiefs fluttered for a second, and they were gone in the dusk.

Pierre and I strolled back into the square and sat down at a tiny table. He tossed six francs on the cloth and we both laughed.

"What will you say to her?" I asked.

"We were held up in the Bois," said Pierre.

"And the six francs?"

"Highwaymen."

"Do you know," said Pierre, "I find Margot an extremely attractive girl."

"What a really wonderful creature Ami is!" I broke in.

We looked each other in the eye. "You fool!" said Pierre and I in chorus.

Then we gripped hands hard across the table and toasted each other in foaming beakers of *vin ordinaire*.

SADDINGTON IN REPRISAL

By Frank M. Barber

THE mail of the twentieth brought me two letters. Each bore the imprint of The Cheever, one of the older clubs of the city. I opened first, by chance, the one which notified me of a special meeting of the Governing Board, of which I was a member. The other was from Charles Saddington, whose closest friend I was. He had written:

MY DEAR JOHN:

Probably you have already received your notice of the Governors' meeting on the thirtieth.

I would suggest that you find it inconvenient to attend. If you do go, you will regret it.

The note was characteristic of Saddington, and I figured it out that within the intervening ten days he would enlighten me. As a matter of fact, he failed to do so.

The comradeship which existed between Saddington and me had always been a matter of comment among those who knew us both, for his friendships were meager, and my place in his regard was unique.

We were together in a retired corner of the club on a late afternoon one day after we had shaken down into our careers, and I took occasion to confide in him. He listened concernedly, and when I had finished, he took my hand and said soberly:

"Well, John, I wish you joy."

His tone led me to observe, smilingly: "Never marry, yourself, I fancy."

"Yes!"

Saddington was married before I. The announcement came almost before our hour had become a recollection. Within a week—on the twentieth—the

club notice and Saddington's note of caution reached me. Eight days later I was called on the telephone by Elton Fulton, a figure in the financial world, and the president of The Cheever. He reminded me of the Governors' meeting, and urged the importance of my attendance. He added that he would be unable to preside, and that I, as vice-president, would be expected to officiate.

I was brusque, I imagine, with the banker, for Fulton was the brother of the woman whom my friend had married, and Saddington's note flashed into my mind. I hastened to Saddington's business house. The boy to whom I gave my card returned from the inner offices of the establishment with the information that Saddington would not see me.

On the evening of the thirtieth I dined at The Cheever. At another table was Saddington, alone. We met in the lobby after dinner. I would have avoided him, for I had not yet cooled from his dismissal of me. Saddington came toward me, smiling sadly.

"I'm sorry you have come, John. It's going to be hard for both of us."

I did not know what he meant, and I was not in the mood to ask him. He excused himself to hand to a messenger several letters which he took from his jacket, and rejoined me.

"Forget it, John," he said. "I couldn't talk the other day."

I softened, for I was fond of him.

"Enough said," I consented. "Now tell me, Charley, what the devil that lightning marriage of yours means."

There was no opportunity for him to answer, for just then we were joined by two other members of the Board, and we proceeded to the Governors' Room.

I was surprised to find Fulton there. The full board, seven in number, was present. I was perplexed, as were four of my colleagues, when neither Fulton nor Saddington took his accustomed seat at the table. The president remained standing, with one hand on the back of a heavy mahogany chair. In his other hand he held a paper, folded. Saddington was seated, alone, at the far end of the room. There was a moment of indecision until the banker squared his frame, and spoke coldly.

"I prefer charges, and present this vote for action by the Board."

He advanced to my side, and handed me a document. I unfolded it.

The Governors of The Cheever Club request the resignation of Charles Saddington.

I am not violating the code, for the deliberations of the Board upon this occasion mysteriously came to be more generally known than would be supposed possible, and I do not hesitate in my own disclosures now.

Fulton waited no longer than was necessary to permit my four fellow members to read the paper which I had passed along.

"I request action without delay," he began. "The man whose resignation from this club I demand has been guilty of conduct which forever closes to him the doors of decency. In the hands of that man himself I have placed my charges in writing. I demand that he be called upon to answer them."

The studied insult in Fulton's nameless reference to Saddington did not escape the men who sat about the oval table, with eyes lowered and hands gripping the arms of chairs. Fulton savagely chewed off the end of a cigar, turned, and glared toward the man down the room. I do not know that I could have spoken if it had been necessary and I was glad to find Saddington on his feet, approaching the table. I was proud of him. Here was no craven. He surveyed us, his eyes finally finding those of Elton Fulton, who returned the flashes.

Saddington threw upon the table a typewritten document. Not a man of us moved toward it. With a shrug

of his shoulders, he began in a low tone.

"You understand, gentlemen, that I am here because I please, and for no other reason."

He paused, reaching for the paper which a moment before he had tossed before us. He glanced at it, and continued:

"The person who is responsible for this," he said, tapping the paper with the backs of his fingers, "has seen fit to make my personal affairs and his a matter of concern with this Board. I challenge the propriety of it."

Fulton was on his feet instantly, but he did not speak. Saddington turned like a flash, and thundered, "Sir!" The president kept his feet, with difficulty restraining himself as the other repeated stingingly:

"I challenge the propriety of it, but I have a duty to perform. I do not deny the charges. I shall not try to justify myself before this Board. I shall give you the facts. In the interests of The Cheever, however, I am forced to request an adjournment. I—"

Fulton, who was still standing, protested harshly, while Saddington's voice rose above that of his antagonist.

"If the members of the Board who are sitting upon this case will permit me to speak privately with the chairman, I shall be able to convince him of the wisdom of my request."

Saddington and I withdrew, and upon my return I recommended that the suggested adjournment be taken. Saddington had left me no alternative. He had merely said:

"John, it is important for the Board, important for the club, and important for you that this adjournment take place. You must read the letter which I sent by messenger this evening to your home. It is my say-so, John, and you will have to accept it."

I went to my apartments, where the letter awaited me. It read:

I am writing this letter as a matter of precaution. It will reach you only in case you attend the Governors' meeting contrary to the suggestion in my note of the 20th. And here is the why of it.

In the first place, I did not wish you present because I wanted you to know certain things from me, and in a manner impossible if told in the presence of others. In the second place, I knew that you would be called upon to preside, and I hoped to protect you from embarrassment.

If you are now reading this letter, it means that you have made my hopes impossible of realization, and all that I can do now is to insist that you serve the club conscientiously, waiving all personal considerations for me. You owe that to The Cheever, and you owe it to yourself.

I cannot tell you, now, what you ought to have from me during an intimate hour, for, manifestly, I must not prejudice you.

I may say that I have done a weird thing, but the fact that I have violated all convention does not exercise me in the slightest. Indeed, I find no difficulty in justifying myself.

Therefore, old man, I caution you not to waste any sympathy on me, and I enjoin you to be the judge and not the friend, a judge until you can again become the friend.

I was indignant. Upon my first reading of the letter I could discern not the slightest justification for Saddington's request for an adjournment. Moreover, I resented it that he should deem it necessary to caution me to perform a gentleman's duty.

I read the letter again, twice, before I caught the subtlety of it. It was Saddington's way, I led myself to fancy, of fortifying me against anxiety, present or to come. He had generously closed the books of the accountability of friendship. It bored in upon me, however, that under the circumstances his concern for me was overdrawn, and I felt that he might well have achieved this delicate end otherwise than by the questionable recess he had occasioned in the deliberations of the Board.

Elton Fulton was in a dark mood when the Governors reassembled the next evening. Lacking the poise which ordinarily marked him, he precipitated a sinister situation with tactless direction. We had hardly taken our seats about the table when the banker broke out:

"I wish to protest against the turn which these proceedings were allowed to take last night. I am convinced that an effort has been made to railroad the judgment of the Board."

I bristled, and Saddington whitened.

One of the Governors plainly resented the thrust, and the others looked their astonishment. Fulton afforded no opportunity for exceptions, however, and he went on.

"It is suggestive," he said cuttingly, "that the man who is on trial here should be permitted to convey secretly to his closest friend confidences so startling as to induce that friend cryptically to halt the deliberations."

"Exactly," shouted Saddington, flaming with anger. My friend was interrupted by Tenney, who rose from his place at my left, doing Saddington the courtesy of an inclination of the head.

"The strictures," said Tenney, "are unwarranted. I have been advised by Mr. Saddington of the reasons for the adjournment."

"So have I," interjected a second and third, while the fourth man down the table drew from his pocket an envelope, and nodded his assent.

Fulton sought to regain his ground, but Saddington swept him a look of contempt, and spoke:

"I had expected exactly this, Mr. Chairman. To the other gentlemen of the Board last night I sent copies of the letter which had gone to you. I feared lest you might be embarrassed, and that the fairness of the Board might be questioned exactly as it has been questioned. Accordingly, I made it a matter of record that not only had you not been made familiar with the facts, but that you had been relieved of any consideration for me."

There was a moment of silence, and Saddington resumed.

"And now, gentlemen, if you are willing, I will proceed."

He disregarded Fulton, whose muscles worked with rage.

"You had better read the charges," he said, placing upon the table the typed page we had ignored the night before.

I took up the document and read it through, and I recoiled from its brutality. The charges in their detail were unspeakable. For a moment I hesitated, and then feebly passed the paper on to my neighbors. Fulton's eyes searched

the countenances of the men about the table as they went through the astonishing arraignment. The emotions of the group were illy concealed. Personally, I was angry with myself that I had not blindly accepted Saddington's suggestion and kept away. Saddington was easily the coolest person there. Erect, imperturbable, he waited. At length, he spoke.

"I do not deny the charges. I do not even ask for your consideration. Indeed, I prefer that the facts be taken for what they are worth, it being distinctly understood that I give them because they ought to be given, and not because I recognize the propriety of the procedure which affords the opportunity."

We were not prepared for the scene that followed. Suddenly Saddington changed. A tremor vibrated his body. Raising his arm, he leveled it toward Fulton and transfixed the man with amazing passion. He tried to speak

and could not. A sneer came from Fulton, whose malevolent gaze sought to match that of Saddington. At length, the latter managed to gather himself. He turned toward us, with his arm still extended in the direction of Fulton, and with deadly scorn said:

"For four years I have known the secret which this coward has thought, until now, my sister carried to her grave. Four years ago I charged myself to bring vengeance upon Elton Fulton. That charge I have kept. I married his sister, and I cast her off!"

We gasped.

Saddington once more faced Fulton. The latter had risen at Saddington's earlier movement of menace. His eyes protruded; the fists, which had been clenched, opened helplessly. He shivered as Saddington raged:

"This monster shall tell what he did to my sister, or I WILL!"

We gazed upon Fulton, a broken man.



THE LAST MONSTER

By George Sterling

IN backward vision, from the primal dusk
 I saw them writhe, reptile and hornèd asp,
 Lizard and hydra, serpents of the fen,
 Abominable. Then the waddling bulks,
 With fangs of death emergent from the slime
 Primordial, rose to the light of suns.
 Thereafter quaked the rank and steaming earth
 To tread of mammoths, and the giant bear,
 Insatiate, loomed shaggy on the night,
 Contending with the tiger for his glut.
 Then sprang the apes, malevolent and swift,
 Upon the stage of being—part of life
 That lived on life. Then a new darkness fell,
 Pierced by the moans of mighty shapes that died.
 Whereat the sun rose elder and austere,
 And mute against the dawn, alert for death,
 With engines of destruction left and right,
 Scanning the skies, stood the last monster, Man.

THE QUACK

By Laura L. Runyon

HIS medical course was taken at one of those small colleges since made infamous by the investigations of the committee appointed by Congress to standardize medical schools. But at the time the Quack Doctor began practice, any degree of M.D. from a college which spent two whole years in teaching medical science was accepted by the State authorities as a sufficient guarantee; and as to the general public, they never even thought to ask, "Where has the doctor studied?" He never intended to be a quack doctor, either. He wanted to be a thoroughly up-to-date physician. He longed to cure all diseases. He had a deep sympathy with sickness of any sort. Circumstances forced him into the quackery business.

Of course he was poor when he started his medical education—otherwise he would have sought the best college in the country, with the longest course and the best hospitals attached. He had to earn his way while he studied—and his mother was earning her way while he studied, and also taking care of younger children. It was a great sacrifice for her to let her oldest boy have two years beyond high school to further fit himself for earning a living. One of the banks had offered him an opening at six dollars a week, with hopes of promotion if he proved to be the right sort. He and his mother had talked it over. He so longed to be a doctor! He believed he could earn his way. His mother was ambitious for her son. She would like to have him something more than a business man—she really secretly hoped he would add something to the world's knowledge, not merely to its material wealth. So they decided that he should refuse the

banker's offer and take his chances at a medical course. So he went to the little college, and in two years he was an M.D. He had studied hard. He had done his best. But some hours each day had to be taken from his studies for work, and that interfered with his record. He had hoped, against reason, of course, that in a competitive examination he might get a position in the hospital that would start him off well. But the position went to a woman who wrote a bold hand and signed only her initials. Anyhow, he would not have got it, for he came out seventh on the list—not a bad record considering that thirty had tried for it—but that was all the comfort he had been able to get from it.

He came home with his diploma. His mother proudly showed it to the neighbors; and, since nothing turned up just then, a sign, "John M. Thrall, M.D.," was placed in a conspicuous place near the front door, and the Doctor waited for patients. No one came but one or two neighbors, who consulted him in such a vague way that he could not consider it a "call," and had not the nerve to make a charge, though he had prescribed. They never spoke of paying. He restlessly paced up and down during his "office hour," or worked over all his old medical books and lectures, and imagined what he would do if such and such a case should appear.

Then he tried to hunt up a few extreme cases—for practice, where a cure would gain him a reputation. There was a badly crippled boy in the town, belonging to a very poor family. He offered his services to "see what he could do," but the family refused. He hoped a plague would break out in the

town, and his services *have* to be called upon, but no plague came. He hoped something might happen to the other doctors, so that an emergency might arise, when he would be called in—but nothing happened. It was an unusually healthy summer. Even the babies seemed to thrive. He had but one case all summer, and that was a man who, while driving through the town, was suddenly attacked with colic, saw his sign and came in for medicine. He told him the regular office fee was one dollar, but that he would charge him only fifty cents as he was an out-of-town case. (He had only given him a teaspoonful of Jamaica ginger, which his mother happened to have in the house.)

So the summer wore away. He was eating the bread and meat his mother earned; he had applied for every possible opening for a physician; he was getting desperate.

One morning he deliberately "cut" his office hour, told his mother to say he was called out of town if anyone came, and went for a long tramp through the woods and meadows. He had reached the crisis. He must either give up trying to be a doctor, or find a way to make it pay. It was on this day that he decided to be a quack.

He decided to break a rule of the scientific profession—and advertise. He would get his mother to move to a town where they were not known—a reasonably large town, but not too large. Then he would advertise in some nearby towns that he could positively cure, in a short time, certain ailments. He thought a long time over what he should adopt as his specialty. Should it be abnormal children? No, there wasn't money enough in that. Nervous diseases? Epileptics? Or just some simple, universal complaint? He decided that nervous diseases furnished the most promising field; its range of possibilities was so much greater.

This settled, he went to work on his theory. Of course he must have a new theory! How was he to convince people that he could cure nervous diseases? He wanted to be just as little of a quack as possible, just enough to get patients

and earn a living, and lead up to a scientific treatment. He knew that rest and proper nourishment would do much for nervous diseases; sometimes it was all that was really needed, if the patient could be persuaded to stick to it. So, if his mother were willing—only she must never know—they would move, get a house where there could be a few rooms for patients, and start a sanitarium; the family could sleep anywhere for a while, if things got crowded. His mother, who was a fine cook, would need no instructions to prepare the "dietary"; his sister Louise, in a nurse's uniform, would help wonderfully. She was naturally motherly, cheery and attractive, and it would do any nervous patient a world of good just to look at her and have her around. But all this was incidental. What was to be his grandstand play for patients? He went over the whole list: laying on of hands; something new in electricity; hypnotism; an East Indian secret recently rediscovered. In all of these he would have able competitors.

He decided (to believe) that he had made a new and far-reaching discovery in medical science; nothing more nor less than that the real centers of the nervous system are located in the back of the neck, the middle of the back and the abdomen, and by proper manipulation of these through a peculiar system which he had discovered, together with a special elixir, cures could be insured in any person under fifty, and great benefit to anyone under seventy-five; after that age, merely quiet, restful existence could be secured. The new treatment was to be named "Nervo-curo." It was awful! He lay on his back for an hour after it was done, and felt just as he had after his first encounter with a "cadaver."

He told his mother only a part of his plan. A better location was necessary for his success; there were too many doctors where they were, and he had lived there most of his life; "a man is not without honor," etc. His mother agreed to do her part, and Louise hers—"if any patients came." This slight reservation made cold chills creep over him. Did they already begin to doubt

him? *He must succeed.* So far as his mother was concerned, the new location decided upon would be better for the boarding house business.

In two weeks they were in their new home, and his advertisements appeared three days afterward in four different towns, as well as the town of Plattsville. Again he kept office hours and waited. A little old lady was the first to appear, brought by her daughter. The old lady had read the advertisement in the town five miles distant; she believed his was the very treatment she needed. The daughter was glad to get free from her mother for a few weeks, and readily agreed to pay the modest price the Doctor asked for room, board and "treatment." The house was on the edge of the town, surrounded by pine trees, quiet, and with a restful outlook of the low hills.

Mrs. Thrall and Louise outdid themselves to please their first patient, and the old lady was happy and settled down to stay some months—the daughter was glad her mother was "getting on so well," and sent cheques regularly.

A boy appeared a day or two after, brought by his mother, herself on the verge of nervous prostration from her efforts to care for the child, who she claimed was perfectly normal, but "too high-strung." Since he would require more attention than the old lady, the price was put up—cautiously—by the Doctor, ready to come down because—well, just because he was "interested in this peculiar case," if necessary. The mother agreed at once; she had not lacked money before for having the boy treated, but she could not bear to send him off alone: he would be so homesick, and the younger children at home precluded the possibility of her remaining with him. But here he had "taken to" the Doctor at once, as he had never done to anyone outside the family before, and Mrs. Thrall and Louise were so "homey," she felt perfectly satisfied he would be all right. Louise agreed to take him in her room, so that if he awoke in the night he would not be alone, and the mother was happy. This saved a room.

The next patient was an overworked

young man troubled with insomnia, and on the verge of insanity. He had tried medicine—that only made him worse. He would try the doctor's Nervo-curo treatments.

"Doctor," he said pathetically, "you must make me sleep."

"Don't you worry," said the Doctor, with all the confidence he could throw into his voice. "You'll have the best night's sleep you've had in years. It's a sure thing!" And he did! Was it the treatment? Was it the long ride in the open air he had taken to get there? Was it the good dinner of Mrs. Thrall, and Louise's bright, clever talk? He never knew, but he gave the Doctor all the credit, and when he left two weeks later, completely "cured," he advertised the treatment widely.

The Doctor became a busy man. He treated the old lady twice a day; he prescribed massage; this Louise attended to under his directions. He prescribed a dietary; this his mother saw to. Was it luck? After a week the old lady began to gain flesh, as well as to be willing to sit quietly and knit or read; she became cheerful, instead of fretful, and if she hadn't been so contented her daughter would have been glad to take her home. Dr. Thrall was advertised in another town for his wonderful new treatment of nervous disorders.

Soon all the rooms were filled, and some rooms hired in the neighborhood. He could have sent the boy home, as taking more time than he was worth, but he would not do it. Instead, he spent all his spare time trying various things. He studied the child sympathetically; he read pedagogical books and psychological books, and devised games and toys for getting and holding his attention. He massaged him; he rigged up a gymnastic apparatus that would develop all the larger bodily muscles and taught him to do certain feats, and to enjoy doing them by the spirit he put into it. The child idolized him, and before a month had passed had decidedly improved, not only in bodily health but intellectually. The mother was delighted. She also spread the fame of the Doctor.

Now he began to be called upon by his own townspeople—those who had nervous diseases that the regular doctors could not cure. His sympathy was so genuine, he listened and seemed to understand so well just how the patient felt, that even before the treatment the patient began to feel better. The Doctor began to believe in his own power—not in his "discovery" but in his power to handle the "atmosphere" with which a patient who was nervous should be surrounded, as a preliminary to a cure.

Once in a while he took a day off and went up to the big city and visited a real sanitarium or a hospital, or attended lectures at a great medical school. He picked up a good many ideas in this way. He also subscribed for the leading medical journals and read them faithfully. He was anxious to be just as little of a quack as possible.

He began to send certain cases he did not understand to specialists. That brought him into favor with specialists, and they divided the fees with him. He had a sort of horror of having a death on his soul. He hated to take his half of the specialist's fee, but to refuse would be to admit that he was a quack in the eyes of the specialist. It was the custom, and he yielded.

It was astonishing how his practice grew! The town doctors did not spare their scorn, but it made little difference; people came away from him *cured*, and that was all the rest needed to prefer him. Within five years he was able to build a sanitarium, a modest one, but one that, filled, would bring him in a good income. He put in many new appliances: electric baths, sweat rooms, a sun parlor. He sent Louise off to the best training school for nurses in the country, and supplied her place with a graduate from the same school. His mother was assisted by a thoroughly trained dietitian and two cooks. He gave up advertising; his patients did that for him.

From his high school days he had loved Helen Morrison, but had never had the courage to tell her so, until now. They were married. Helen also helped in the sanitarium. She had the same

warm sympathy and good understanding that he had. Patients were reluctant to leave, even after they were convinced that they were cured. They left with regret, and returned if at all ailing and they had the price. It was like a visit back home; they were all so genuinely glad to see you, and so solicitous.

So the Doctor's practice grew year by year. Less and less was said about Nervo-curo, and more and more about electric treatment, his correct diagnoses, the splendid meals, and good care of the nurses and under physicians; and as the years passed, the town became better known for its sanitarium than for its factories; and yet the Doctor was unhappy. There were so many cases he knew he did not know how to cure because he really did not know what was the matter! He had hinted to some of the able physicians he had met that he would not be averse to a partnership; but although his sanitarium was successful, he had never put the prices very high, and the increased cost of having it well kept and his patients well cared for did not leave enough of an excess to be an inducement to a really able physician. So he hired some young men direct from medical schools, with their future before them.

When his son was born he decided to give him the best possible medical education, to train him up to be a really scientific and skillful physician, and the boy should be his partner!

So the boy became his special care in every off hour, and he managed to have at least two hours a day for him. As soon as the boy began to play with blocks, he taught him by devices of his own to tell the difference in the touch of silk, cotton, wool, paper and other materials. He made a game of it, until the boy's sense of touch was far above that of the average child, and the intelligence of the child developed with it. Instead of building block towers and unarchitectural churches, this boy at three could put the arms and legs of a manikin together, and place in the chest cavity the heart and lungs in their right places. By the time he was ten he could name every bone and organ in the

body and put it in its right place in the manikin.

The boy's plays were pretending that his manikin was ill and setting its bones, or massaging it for dyspepsia, for liver trouble or other ills. By the time the boy was fifteen, he knew every gland and could correctly trace every muscle and nerve. His knowledge of the mechanism of the body was as complete as any medical school of the day could give, while his sensitiveness of touch, his quickness of hand and sureness of eye and hand working together in the operations he had performed on cats, chickens and dogs might well be the envy of a surgeon of years of experience.

The Doctor could hardly contain his joy as the boy voluntarily selected and read with deep interest medical journals in place of story books. The boy was his companion in visiting the sick whenever possible, and the father looked forward with eagerness to the time when the sign might read, "John M. Thrall and Son."

Mindful of his own inadequate training, the Doctor insisted on a thorough college course first, and the boy might have his choice of Yale, Harvard, Columbia or Chicago, but sciences must form the background of his academic studies, so Chicago became his choice.

During the years the boy was away from home on his college work, and later his medical course, and then in an advanced post-graduate course, the father dreamed of the day when they should work together.

He even hurt his conscience a little by the prices he charged, especially when he knew the people could ill afford to pay so high; but his son's education was costly, and he must have all the advantages possible.

At last the boy was through; at last he was coming home; and at last the sanitarium was to be no longer a quack institution, but a place for really scientific treatment of diseases so far as science had revealed the way. Seven years had passed since the boy had been at home except for brief visits. The father hardly felt he knew the tall, handsome fellow whom he met at the station, and

yet he appeared all that he had dreamed he might become. There was a distinguished air about him: the air of a man who knows that he knows well some things. It was that atmosphere which the Doctor had himself so often encountered among the specialists whom at great cost he had occasionally secured to come to the sanitarium for consultation. The boy had his father's quick, observant gaze, combined with sympathy, that led the sick patient to sigh with relief and confidence.

After supper was over, and the boy had talked with his mother and sisters, and the Doctor had finished his round for the night, the boy came to the office and said:

"Now I am ready to begin. Shall we talk it over?"

"Would you not rather wait until morning?"

"As to individual cases, of course, but I meant your general plan. What do you wish me to do?"

The Doctor hesitated. Just how could he tell the boy—this distinguished man, who knew—that he *did not know* what was the matter with half the patients in the sanitarium? How could he tell the boy, what he had long ago discovered, that it was his personality, not his treatment, that cured—that, and the ordinary rules for health: good food, fresh air, a peaceful mind? That he could not make any intelligent diagnosis of many of the cases? Dare he make a clean breast of it? Dare he say that he was a quack, and knew it, and beg his son to fulfill the part he had planned for him? Wouldn't the boy find it out soon if he didn't tell him? Somehow he had never quite faced this side of it before. With that tall, handsome, distinguished young man, it looked different! He felt all unprepared to meet the situation. Slowly he said:

"There are several new patients coming tomorrow. I think I will turn them over to you from the beginning. You may take entire charge of them. Then there are a half-dozen on whom we will consult. As new ones come in, I will ask you to diagnose their cases, and with your larger knowledge to prescribe treat-

ment. I am getting rusty, son; I am anxious to have you take the heavy end." So it was settled for a time.

But the new patients often refused to be placed entirely in the hands of the son. It was the old doctor they had come to consult. It was the old doctor who had made the reputation. They insisted that he diagnose their cases, and that he prescribe treatment and see them daily.

The young doctor, with his scientific education, accepted his father's frank statement that he was getting out of date at its face value, and advised giving up several of the contrivances which the old doctor had put in. These, the young doctor explained, were based on exploded theories. They had little or no scientific value, except in a way—which he made light of—of letting the patient think something was being done for him. He suggested other equipment, very expensive, but scientific. They went over the finances, and found it could not be put in without again raising prices, which the father was unwilling to do—at least, not yet.

Weeks passed, and yet the patients who were willing to take the new doctor in place of the old were few. A year passed, and the reputation of the new doctor had not spread, in spite of the fact that he had cured many patients. The chance to do some really good work was hampered because of the old apparatus and the impossibility of changing things. The old methods were persisted in, though admittedly useless. The young doctor grew restless, unhappy, the old doctor worried. The climax came.

One day the son asked for an hour with his father to talk things over. And again, after the patients had been visited for the night, the father and son met in

the office. The door was closed and father and son faced each other.

"Father, I can't stand this," the son began.

The father looked down. There was scarcely surprise on his face, only deep anxiety.

"Let us be frank, son," he said in a low voice; "what is it?"

The son rose and took a hurried turn about the room.

"How can I tell you? I realize all you have done for me. I realize that you have done it by this business—and yet—father, forgive me, but this is all quackery; and it hurts my soul!"

There was a tense stillness in the father's face and form.

"But I wanted you to put it on a really scientific basis."

"And that is just what I cannot do. You have made the business, and you only can carry it on. I cannot help you; the two won't work together, even if—I were willing. Father, I want to be a scientific physician. Here I am compelled to do what I do not believe in. It will always be so. Neither you nor I can change it. You know I have had several offers lately—let me be free. You have generously given me a partnership in this, but I am not earning it. Though it is twice what I shall get in the beginning, I prefer the other life. Father, I believe this is disappointing to you. I am sorry. But, believe me, I cannot go on!"

Slowly the old doctor rose from his seat and went up to his son. He put his hands on the boy's shoulders, and bowed his head for a moment. Then he said:

"Go, my son, and God be with you."

The son wrung his father's hand, and went out. The old doctor was left alone with his quackery.



SUGGESTED name for a boozier's daughter: Ethyl.



ONCE—Ample.

THE LIE

By Ludwig Lewisohn

The drama of ideas has not yet got a foothold in America, but Mr. Lewisohn in this one-acter has, in our judgment, done something distinctly Continental, in the best sense of that word. "The Lie" is the first consequential play of its kind to come out of America. It will appeal strongly to those intelligently interested in the modern drama. Mr. Lewisohn is, besides being a writer of exceptional merit, a conscientious student of the European drama, and is the authorized translator and editor of the works of Gerhart Hauptmann. "The Lie" marks a decided step forward in the development of American dramatic literature.

CHARACTERS

HARRISON BEARD (*an architect*)
BLANCHE (*his wife*)
AUSTIN GROSE
A MAID

PLACE: *The Beards' apartment, New York City.*

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE—*A library. The furniture, pictures and hangings are subdued, modern, harmonious. Bookcases cover the walls except that at the left of the spectator, which holds a rococo mantel. The door leading to the outer hall is in the background at the extreme left. Easy chairs covered with dim russet leather are placed with graceful irregularity. A small library table stands near the center of the room. Upon it lie scattered papers, books and copies of the "Architectural Record." Conspicuously upon the last number of this magazine lies a man's cardcase of black leather.* BLANCHE BEARD, a nervous, slightly exotic beauty of twenty-seven, walks about the room languidly, putting things to rights. Her cheek bones are a trifle high, her eyes dark with an almost olive glint in them. She has on a morning gown of Japanese silk, the loose sleeves of which show the white firmness of her arms. She approaches the table, turns over the papers carelessly, then catches sight of the cardcase. She picks it up and holds it irresolutely for a moment. Then, with a deprecating smile, she opens it. Her gestures at once take on a feverish haste. She tears a letter from the cardcase, opens it, recognizes a woman's handwriting and, blushing and quivering, masters its contents. Her eyes grow hard and relentless. Holding the letter clutched in one hand, the cardcase in the other, she suddenly swings around and gazes at the door. HARRISON BEARD, tall, blond, a mixture of strength and sensitiveness, enters hastily and stops short at sight of the objects in BLANCHE'S hands and the look in her eyes.

BLANCHE (*dropping the cardcase and the letter*)

You're too late.

BEARD (*in a repressed voice, hoarding his strength for the coming struggle*)

I'm sorry—

BLANCHE

For your negligence or your deceit?

BEARD (*powerless to lie convincingly, stretching out his hands*)

My dearest girl—

BLANCHE

Don't. That kind of thing is merely insulting from you now.

BEARD (*firmly*)

That's where you're wrong. My feelings for you are just as genuine and just as worthy as they were before I was fool enough to drop that case.

BLANCHE (*bitterly*)
No doubt!

BEARD

You misunderstand. I mean that I care for you just as sincerely as I did before all that that letter tells you came into existence.

BLANCHE

I'm glad that the creature leaves your conjugal feelings so beautifully intact!

BEARD

I beg of you, Blanche! Miss Archer is not a—creature! Please heap your wrath on me. You can't judge her; you saw her only once.

BLANCHE

I can judge of her character by her relations to you. (*With subtle curiosity*) Yes, I saw her just once. She isn't good-looking!

BEARD

Not at a glance. But she's charming and intelligent and—

BLANCHE (*stormily*)

It's unspeakably caddish of you to praise her to me.

BEARD

You provoked the description.

BLANCHE

But you can enjoy her society undividedly. I have no taste for the role of a discarded and neglected wife!

BEARD (*drily*)

You've just this moment discovered that you're neglected. I never heard you say that before. As a matter of fact, it's the other way. It is your utter neglect of me that first called Miss Archer—by contrast—to my attention.

BLANCHE

I have neglected you? Don't stoop to subterfuge, Harry.

BEARD

It's the truth! What time or thought have you had for me since Robbie came? What—

BLANCHE

You excuse your philandering by pretending to be jealous of your own child? Ugh!

BEARD

Jealous of the dear little fellow? I don't pretend that at all. He's simply the innocent cause of my awakening to certain unfortunate facts.

BLANCHE

I don't understand.

BEARD

No, and I dare say you won't. But the fact is that, since Robbie came—even before he came—I quite ceased to be a human personality in your eyes. My work, my aims, my thoughts grew utterly indifferent to you. I became merely the father of your child and the provider of your home.

BLANCHE (*with self-pity*)

I wanted you and needed you as much as ever. You were never late but you found me waiting for you.

BEARD

Yes, because the provider and protector is a necessary condition of the

home. You did not wait for me because I am I and you are you and because we loved each other. You wanted me to succeed, not to be proud of my success, but that Robbie might have a better provision in life and that our home might be finer. I'm an adjunct, a prop—a domestic drudge!

BLANCHE (*icily*)

That's a term usually and properly reserved for women.

BEARD

Quite improperly in our social set. With us it is the man who drudges. What for? To realize his individuality? To fling luxury upon his idol? No, but to feed and glut that particular maw of the many-headed social monster which he calls his home!

BLANCHE

I thought good men were proud of their homes.

BEARD

When they have nothing else to be proud of. I'd rather be alone with you in some desert—outcast, naked—and have you love me and cry and laugh with my moods and sink and soar with my thoughts and rejoice with me in them, and achieve nothing—than build palaces and skyscrapers and earn thousands and be nothing but the slave of your female instinct for the conservation of the race!

BLANCHE (*bewildered*)

We're getting pretty far from Miss Archer, aren't we?

BEARD

No, we're getting straight to her.

BLANCHE

Oh, I'm beginning to see! Everything is reversed in this case. You played the part of the misunderstood husband, and the sweet thing sympathized and listened and adored!

BEARD (*stung by the apparent justness of her remark*)

Confound it! There isn't anything that you can't put in a belittling way!

BLANCHE (*quietly*)

Oh, I'm not trying to belittle anything. Miss Archer went over your plans with you, with so much artistic intelligence and sympathy.

BEARD (*warily*)

She did.

BLANCHE

And even ventured a suggestion, subject to the approval of the august male intellect?

BEARD

Well—well—

BLANCHE

And occasionally your hands would touch or a curl of her hair flutter against your face, or the perfume from her bodice—

BEARD

You—you—

BLANCHE

Don't be vulgar, Harry. (*Stingingly*) Well, do you suppose she did it for the sake of your aims or your fine dreams or the expression of your individuality? She did it because she's a twenty-dollar-a-week secretary, and she thought she might possibly get you away from me to be the father of *her* children and the provider of *her* home! Well, she can have you! Your notions are as depraved as your conduct. (*She sinks into a chair and weeps angrily.*)

BEARD (*walking to the mantel and slowly lighting a cigarette*)

You're quite right. And, of course, you don't see how your perspicacity damns you.

BLANCHE

Certainly not!

BEARD

Exactly. And you think your lack of understanding a virtue. But don't you see that, in describing Miss Archer's motives and views, you've described your own?

BLANCHE

You accuse *me* of ever trying to rob another woman of her husband?

BEARD (*with a tired smile*)
I accuse you of nothing. You're quite unassailable.

BLANCHE
But what's going to happen now?

BEARD
Nothing. I'll chuck the girl. In my heart of hearts I always knew she was playing the same old comedy of enticement. But it was good to believe it all real—while it lasted!

BLANCHE
And do you think I'll ever be able to trust you again?

BEARD (*lying instinctively to guard his future freedom*)
I think you may, my dear. I've had enough.

BLANCHE
And how far had this thing gone?

BEARD (*as before*)
It was quite innocent in spite of the impassioned tone of her letter. You have nothing gross to accuse me of.

BLANCHE
If I were sure—if I could be sure!
(*The trill of the outer bell is faintly heard.* BLANCHE starts up. She catches her breath quickly and a sudden pinkness overspreads her face. Immediately thereafter the MAID enters and announces, standing in the door: "Mr. Grose." BLANCHE hurries across the room and whispers to the MAID: "Not at home." At once she realizes the mistake of her impulse, turns quickly and meets her husband's ironical glance. The MAID, quietly observing the scene, lingers.)

BEARD (*to the MAID*)
Send him in! Yes, go ahead! (*To BLANCHE*) So we're in the same boat!

BLANCHE (*uncertainly*)
In what respect?

BEARD
The beautiful Austin Grose doesn't call on ladies in the middle of the forenoon unless he knows he's wanted or—expected.

(AUSTIN GROSE enters. *He is tall and well built, with a touch of effeminacy on his delicately moulded face.*)

GROSE (*surprised but with immediate self-possession*)
My dear friends! What a pleasure to find you both!

BEARD
Oh, yes. How do you do?

BLANCHE (*conventionally*)
So glad to see you.

GROSE (*with a furtive look at both*)
I came to ask whether you wouldn't both take luncheon with me at the Abbey Inn next Wednesday. The spring is too beautiful to keep us in town.

BEARD
Ask my wife. (*He wanders irresolutely to the mantel and selects a fresh cigarette.*)

GROSE (*softly*)
Is anything wrong, *Madonna*?

BLANCHE
Wrong? Look at my eyes! They're red! Oh!

GROSE
Your eyes have the vision that makes them always beautiful.

BLANCHE (*suddenly loathing his phrases in the presence of a real anxiety*)
Don't! I'm heartbroken!

BEARD (*who has slowly recrossed the room, watching them grimly*)
We were just having our first quarrel when you came in.

GROSE (*with great readiness*)
That shows an admirable record. How long have you been married?

BEARD
Nearly three years. And I'll tell you something more admirable: It will be our last quarrel, too. (*Significantly*) We've evened up our accounts and can start square.

GROSE

What a businesslike way of regarding things!

BEARD

Marriage is a business arrangement. We seek our pleasures outside of it.

BLANCHE (*fiercely*)

Are you quite through?

BEARD

I'm instructing our friend—for the future. He may marry.

GROSE (*rising*)

I don't know. (*With a winningly conciliating smile at BEARD*) All the women I've ever truly admired were beyond my reach. They were all married already.

BEARD

Lucky dog!

GROSE

Now, will you go with me? The inn overlooks the river—

BEARD (*curtly*)

We'll see. It's impossible to promise—at least, for myself. Blanche will write.

GROSE (*conventionally to BLANCHE*) Do! I should be so disappointed, if—

BLANCHE (*in the same way*)
We'll do our best.

(GROSE takes BLANCHE's hand for a moment and is ushered out by BEARD. BLANCHE sits down, rests her head on her hand and bites her lips. The voices of the men in the hall are heard.)

GROSE

Forgive my intrusion, I was so anxious.

BEARD

Not at all. Glad to have seen you. Good-bye.

(*The outer door slams.*)

BEARD (*re-entering the room and standing before BLANCHE*)

You might have saved us both our farce this morning. As I said to that ass, our accounts are square.

BLANCHE

I don't admit it for a moment.

BEARD (*continuing*)

And since you had your own little affair on your conscience, the least you could have done, in common honesty, was to have overlooked Miss Archer's letter—to have been silent about it.

BLANCHE (*resolutely*)

I haven't the least idea what you're driving at! I found the letter and I was heartbroken. Any woman would be! I don't know now to what extent you've been unfaithful!

BEARD

I have the same doubts of you for equally good reasons. And I have additional light on the whole subject.

BLANCHE (*fiercely*)
Your additional light!

BEARD

It seems that you, no more than I, are contented with the merely domestic. (*Ironically*) You keep the home—the beautiful home—and I pay the bills. Then, for our souls' good, I have my Miss Archer, and you have your—Mr. Grose. What a rotten farce!

BLANCHE

You interpret everything in the light of your own wickedness. All men seem to. I've done my whole duty as a wife and a mother; I've nothing to accuse myself of. I don't care that for Mr. Grose and his exquisite airs. He's known to be a flirt. That doesn't touch me. But you—you—

BEARD

Oh, yes, my actions are a little grosser, no doubt. But that's merely the difference in sex. Perhaps Mr. Grose has been permitted to kiss only your hand, and I've kissed Lucy on the mouth.

BLANCHE

There! There! I knew it!

BEARD

But let's be honest once in our lives—even about our dishonesties. I loathe the role of a mere husband, you that of

a mere wife. I'm not content to drudge for the home, you're not content to keep it. That may come later, when we're old. Today we want to be hero and heroine to somebody, even if it's an illusion. We want that illusion. We want to be fighters and dreamers in somebody's eyes; we want to be touched and pitiéd and thrilled. We want to play with all the fires of life. Very well, let's do it and say no more.

BLANCHE (*rising and drawing herself to her full height*)

You're very eloquent. But don't attribute your feelings to me. Every good woman is satisfied with her home, and with her husband's love—if she has it.

BEARD

Trash—this talk about good women as creatures who have divested themselves of all the instincts and impulses of human nature except the domestic. You're not that kind!

BLANCHE

I didn't say I was—that kind. But if my husband doesn't offer me the finer elements of life, I don't look for them elsewhere.

BEARD

You're thoroughly dishonest. You don't want those elements with me. That's what I complained of. And I know perfectly your reason for refusing to admit the facts.

BLANCHE

And that reason?

BEARD

It is that you don't want to grant me the liberties which you take. You want to flirt and philander and yet act the part of exquisite innocence so as to keep me confined to the domestic treadmill. No, don't talk! And the degrading part of it is that you lie for purely economic reasons. You won't

permit me the freedom you want because you're afraid I might get entangled and cease to foot the bills.

BLANCHE (*cornered and desperate, taking refuge in pathos*)

I have no such thoughts. This is our home which you choose to slur and to degrade; in the next room is our child, our little boy. I do want your love and your fidelity. They're my rights—

BEARD

And how about Mr. Grose? What was his function in this home?

BLANCHE

He hasn't any here! I won't insult myself by saying more. But I'll show you in which of us the true spirit of marriage is alive. Promise me, promise me that you'll see the woman no more, and the whole thing shall be forgotten.

BEARD

So that's your last effort to save yourself and put me in the wrong!

BLANCHE

I need no saving, and you are in the wrong.

BEARD (*sternly*)

If you were to admit the truth, we might begin again and determine to find in each other what we have sought elsewhere. But you're simply maneuvering to have me buckle under, and I refuse.

BLANCHE

I don't, Harry, I don't—except in so far as you ought to! (*Stretching out her arms.*) It's our duty to try.

BEARD

Not with your lie between us. (*He turns and leaves the room with rapid strides.* **BLANCHE** *clenches her fists.* *Tears of defeat and mortification start into her eyes.*)

CURTAIN.



CONTE À LA LUNE

Par E. G. Perrier

C'ÉTAIT au temps où les fées roulaient carrosse d'or par les sentiers des forêts et venaient au bord des sources conduire la ronde des elfes et des farfadets... Alors les hommes avaient la tête pleine d'illusions, ils aimaient s'attarder le soir à compter les étoiles, le chant d'une cigale dans les herbes les remplissait d'extase et ils écoutaient et regardaient de tout leur cœur les bruits et les choses de la Nature dont la mystérieuse et l'infinie Grandeur les portait insensiblement vers le Rêve...

Jan, plus que les autres, éprouvait une douce jouissance à s'oublier ainsi dans cette éternelle contemplation: tout ce qui est beau le faisait vibrer, tout ce qui brille l'éblouissait, et sa petite âme, vive et joyeuse comme l'oiselette, chantait en lui d'une manière étourdissante... Pourtant Jan n'était pas poète, il ne portait ni la viole d'ébène ni la harpe aux cordes d'acier — ce n'était qu'un humble paysan le plus humble de tous — mais il avait vingt ans et il savait pour l'avoir appris par la voix d'une hirondelle, que l'Amour est capable d'enfanter des prodiges.

... Or un jour, féru de folie, qu'il s'amusait à cueillir des rayons dans les tresses d'or d'une blondinette, celle-ci doucement leva sur lui ses grands yeux bleus:

— "Jan?" — dit-elle.

Jan tressaillit de tout son corps, tant la voix chérie, à ce moment-là, était caressante...

— "Jan" — continua l'ingénue — "quel prix donneriez-vous de mon baiser?"

Sous la cotte de velours, le cœur du jeune homme se mit à battre bien fort! —

Un baiser! Était-ce possible? — Il mit un genou en terre et tout en jouant d'une main distraite avec le bout des doigts blancs de son Amoureuse, il balbutia je ne sais quoi pour dire qu'il était prêt à donner en échange le ciel et la terre et qui sait? — peut-être encore davantage!...

— "Jan! Jan!" — reprit langoureusement la blondinette — "Savez-vous qu'Aladin fut au Pays de la Mort chercher pour celle qu'il aimait la lampe merveilleuse? Savez-vous qu'Arthur a disputé aux vautours du ciel le diamant bleu qui brille au doigt de sa fiancée?... Savez-vous aussi que je vous aime, Jan?"

Oui! oui! le jeune homme savait tout cela!... Mais quel présent rare, mon Dieu! ou quelle chose inouïe avait-elle donc à lui demander, cette enfant, pour le regarder d'un œil si tendre et pour lui sourire si gentiment?...

— "Jan! Jan!... Si je vous demandais d'aller dans les champs où les blés sont coupés me faire une gerbe de soleil, vous penseriez sans doute: Niarka s'amuse! Un harnet s'est logé dans sa tête!... Pourtant, ami cher, vous n'en diriez rien..."

— "Je vous aime!" — murmura Jan.

— "Si je vous disais: il faut boire d'un trait l'Océan ou franchir d'un bond l'espace qui sépare le ciel de la terre, vous penseriez: Niarka veut que je meure... mais vous sourriez quand même!"

Jan répéta si bas, si bas, que ses lèvres seules l'entendirent: "Je vous aime!"

— "Jan! Jan!" — continua la blondinette, tandis qu'une rougeur fugitive courait sur ses joues — "c'est pour cela que vous êtes l'élu de mon cœur,

mais, rassurez-vous: c'est pour cela aussi que je ne veux pas exiger de vous l'impossible... Mon baiser est peu de chose et je vous l'offre pour peu de chose... Voici mon désir..."

Sa main coquette, avec son air de rien du tout, laissa négligemment glisser sa ceinture autour de sa taille.

— "Ami Jan, mon chevalier" — a-cheva-t-elle — "pour l'Amour de moi, allez là-haut et m'apportez la lune!..."

Elle avait dit cela sans sourire, la petite Niarka. Il n'y avait dans sa voix aucune intonation ironique. Non, elle ne plaisantait pas! Même ses sourcils s'étaient froncés d'une manière singulière, ce qui était sa façon à elle d'exprimer une volonté impérieuse...

La lune! Que voulait-elle donc en faire, la folle enfant? Peut-être rêvait-elle de l'enchâsser dans un écrin et de s'en parer comme d'un joyau aux jours de fête?...

Justement le ciel ce soir-là était plein de rayons, une lueur blanche incendiait l'horizon... Soudain, par-dessus les coteaux, une face blasphème se montra: c'était la lune qui se levait! Non pas celle-là qui hante les nuits indécise où zigzaguent les danses des Pierrots et des Colombines. Comme pour mieux tenter le désir, elle avait mis sa robe des dimanches; elle était radieuse, éblouissante... Une vraie lune de Paradis. Et elle riait, la gueuse! Elle riait à pleine bouche tandis que le vent autour d'elle épargnait les nuées comme des mous-selines et elle avait l'air de s'amuser follement à papoter avec les étoiles:

— "Regardez" — disait-elle sans doute — "regardez cette jolie fille qui s'imagine qu'on attrape les lunes au vol aussi aisément que les papillons!"

Jan, atterré, n'osait souffler mot, mais tout en glissant à la dérobée un regard inquiet vers le ciel, il murmura en lui-même: — "Comment faire, mon Dieu? — et il se recommandait avec ferveur à l'Amour, ce démon bénit, pour lequel aucune merveille n'est impossible..."

— "Monsieur l'Amour, si j'avais vos ailes, n'irai-je pas jusque là-haut?"

Mais — voyez le contretemps — Monsieur l'Amour, ce soir-là, s'était envolé... Monsieur l'Amour s'était endormi

dans quelque coin, sous un bosquet de roses...

Pauvre Jan, que vas-tu devenir si tout le monde t'abandonne?...

En vain supplierais-tu les nuages de te prendre à leur bord: les nuages ne t'entendront pas... En vain crierais-tu ton désespoir aux vents du ciel: les vents du ciel sont des ravageurs qui ne comprennent rien aux choses du cœur...

Hélas! tu le vois bien, nul espoir ne te reste... La lune, là-haut, continue à rire de ta mine allongée... Niarka la blondinette est perdue pour toi... Perdu aussi le baiser de miel sur ta lèvre en fleur... Petit Jan, pleure tes dernières larmes et fais ton dernier acte d'adoration; tu n'as plus qu'à mourir.

Mourir! Comme voilà un mot triste à dire quand on a vingt ans et comme il vaudrait mieux continuer à chanter le beau soleil et les printemps pleins de fleurs et de voix d'oiseaux...

Vers la source où Niarka aime à se mirer, Jan dirige ses pas... Il songe que, parmi les lianes où cascade l'écumé, il fera meilleur à dormir pour toujours et il ne maudit pas son Amoureuse, mais il pleure malgré lui toutes les larmes de ses yeux... Déjà sur l'eau claire son corps se penche, prêt à se laisser choir...

— O miracle! Arrête Jan!... — N'est-ce pas la lune que j'aperçois là, tout près, moqueuse et folle, au fond du bassin? Par quel hasard est-elle ainsi tombée du ciel?... Regarde... tu n'as qu'un geste à faire pour la saisir!...

Et tandis que les elfes et les farfadets retiennent leur souffle et que les fleurs inclinent la tête pour mieux voir, Jan, qui n'ose en croire ses yeux, pousse un cri et se précipite, battant l'écumé de ses bras, fouillant jusqu'en ses tréfonds...

Maintenant, dans le creux de sa main bien close, il ramène quelque chose...

— "Mon Dieu! si c'était la lune!..."

Avec d'infinies précautions il soulève un doigt et regarde... — Oh! bonheur!... C'est elle! c'est bien elle! — et c'est là justement le merveilleux de ce conte, car dans la source frissonnante la petite main de Jan n'avait ramassé qu'une goutte d'eau, mais cette goutte d'eau était si limpide que la lune, qui s'y reflétait toute entière, y semblait emprisonnée!...

THE IDEA OF SUCH A PLAY!

By George Jean Nathan

AT fifteen minutes after nine o'clock on the night of September the twenty-sixth, in the Year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and thirteen, the curtain of the Princess Theater, affectionately advertised as a "theater of ideas," fell upon a play containing something approximating, however remotely, an idea.

And at sixteen minutes after nine o'clock on the night of September the twenty-sixth, in the Year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and thirteen, the management of the Princess Theater, being indignantly apprised that the Tenor of New York newspaper dramatic criticism was just too annoyed at any so scandalous and unintelligible a theatrical innovation, vindicated the honor of the American theatrical manager by suppressing the play on the spot.

Although it so happened that I was sponsor for the little piece in question, I still cannot persuade myself to believe that the management acted unwisely in this matter. It would decidedly have been an indiscreet thing to have permitted ideas to creep into the American theater. Heaven knows, business is bad enough already.

Were not the entire process so witty and at the same time betokening, I should hesitate to set myself to the reporting of an event that involves so usual a theatrical accouchement of buffoonery. But the girlish humors of the situation tease me out of reluctance. And so, dear children, cluster round me closely and give me your ears.

One evening about ten months ago, there were gathered together around six seidels of superb brew in New York City as many men. Four were dramatic

critics. None of the four had ever accepted a magnificent contract from a theatrical manager to novelize his dramas in advance of their production—or after—and, were they to have formed a quartette and to have endeavored to do in song the celebrated tetractomic passage from Boito's "Mefistofèle" or from "Rigoletto," there would have been lacking from amongst them a cherubic *tenore leggiere* to dally with the notes in the vicinity of the first C. The other souls present embraced a British editor and writer of spacious repute and an American critic of the combined arts whose name is known, if not in New York, then at least wherever intelligent men are in the habit of convening.

The jaunty discourse was upon theatrical conditions resident in New York. Finally, these two frolicsome opinions were disentangled:

1. That there was not in New York a theatrical manager possessed simultaneously of sufficient education and courage to admit into his theaters a play containing an idea that was not a platitude, that was not sweetened with sentimentality, that was not already unanimously concurred in by the public at large.

2. That, even were there such manager, the rank and file of New York newspaper criticism would be similarly of such insufficient education and consequent courage that it would prevent, or at least seek to prevent, the presentation of such an idea.

It was decided, by lustful way of manufacturing a series of magazine articles out of the contention, to put the theory to the test. And, putting it to the test, to put it so maliciously and with such a sense of low humor that—when the test had been properly accomplished—the parties of the second part should be shown up as the gay young humbugs they were, over the seidels,

held to be. The first step in the campaign was the assembling of certain specific ideas revealed in the writings of Thomas Paine, Ernest Renan, Voltaire, Giordano Bruno, Huxley, Haeckel, Humboldt, Nietzsche, David Hartley, Kant, Schopenhauer, Martineau, Diderot, Joseph Priestley, David Hume and Von Hartmann, ideas of which, obviously, no theatrical manager and only a few of the metropolitan newspaper reviewers would ever have heard. The second step was the drawing of lots to determine which one of us should be the *capra hircus*.

I, damme, lost.

With the ideas of this august confraternity as a groundwork, I attempted, careless-like, to elaborate the philosophies into the unsentimental theory that all faith is like unto a blind man being guided across a teeming thoroughfare by a beautiful, deaf child; that all faith is based on coincidences and is intrinsically of ocular rather than mental genesis; that tradition is ever more puissant than clear thinking; that sacrifice means only that we must not doubt what is doubtful; and that were Kellar, the prestidigitator, to go among any savage tribe that tribe would forthwith burst into ecstatic hosannah and to him consecrate its altars. I chose as my tools not one faith but each and every faith, each and every religion, save that of the followers of Siddartha, or Buddha, which, of course, is fundamentally atheistic and hence would have been impossible of inclusion. I chose every faith of every segment of the world—from that of the sun worshipers who prostrated themselves in heliolatry because, forsooth, had they not *seen* the sun give back strength to the ailing (see “sun parlor”—also “open air sanatorium”—also the writings of E. B. Tylor) and, forsooth, had they not *seen* the sun cast a shadow of the cactus so that it “supernaturally” resembled a man’s face, to the faiths of our world of today.

This theory, touched on so masterfully in one of its phases by Eugène Brieux in his beautifully themed play, “La Foi,” I placed into the dra-

matic form that is at present being employed by the thoroughly proficient and “modern” theatrical artificers of Europe, Schnitzler, Bahr, Shaw, Molnar, Birmingham, *et al.*, that is to say, the uncompromising and perfectly deliberate—and so-stigmatized “talky”—form in place of the conventional and vastly admired glass-smashing, door-busting, “crosses R.” and “crosses L.” American scrivening ritual. And, as a compromise to the intelligence of a native audience, I injected into the theme a sort of vaudeville finish. The whole job took about two days.

After the *bierverein* had passed on the piece that was to act as a thermometer of the mental temperature and attitude of our kaiserstadt managers and newspaper reviewers, it was decided, by way of making assurance doubly sure, first to submit the manuscript to several physicians of standing who should regard the pathologic strait of the theme and to several eminent Episcopal clergymen who should devote themselves to a dissection of its spiritual crisis. This was done; two changes were made in the script as a result of the analyses of these gentlemen; and the play, according to the scheme concocted by the lagerish nihilists, was the following month printed in the pages of this magazine. You may perhaps remember it. It was called “THE ETERNAL MYSTERY.”

The seemingly innocent idea of printing the play in a magazine was probably not altogether so innocent as would appear on the surface. Initially, it was believed that if there remained any soundly objectionable liver spots on the face of the theme of the play, advance publication of the play would bring them to light. No objections—or liver spots—forthcame. Secondly, it was argued that it would be more auspicious, for the purposes of the dastardly plot, if the play were thus placed on the open market as a bait, with an equal chance afforded all the fish to nibble at one and the same time.

The curtain falls at this juncture, indicating a lapse of six months.

Announcement was made in the daily

journals that the play was to be produced at the Princess Theater. And defeat seemed about to mock the six scheming scalawags, to flout them, to prove to them that they had lost the hounds. Especially as, during the five final days of rehearsal, the flock of gentlemen comprising the management of "the theater of ideas" had exhibited no signs of being distilled to jelly at the prospect of having an unpopular idea cross the portals of their playhouse. Especially as, moreover, the cronies of these gentlemen, upon taking a preliminary peek at the piece, had not taken them by the arm, led them abruptly into a dark corner and expostulated: "Say, whatthell do you guys mean by takin' a chance with a show like this?" Yes, defeat seemed about to thumb its nose at the smart-alecky six.

And then—sixteen minutes after nine o'clock, September the twenty-sixth, the Year of Our Lord nineteen thirteen. Up the aisle in high dudgeon tripped a Little Gentleman, face aflush, breast heaving. Into the sanctum of the trembling managers, trembling now at the very thought of the bravado into which they had been misled in presenting such a play, he skipped.

"What *do* you mean, you horrid people, putting on a play with an idea? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, really you ought! And I say to you right now, you awful things, if you don't expunge it from your bill on this instant, I shall be compelled to berate you most severely. So there!"

Panic seized the brave managers. All, that is, save William A. Brady (who is Irish).

"How do you know the play's got an idea in it?" demanded William of the wrathful little soul, as the other managers made signs to him behind the wrathful little soul's back to desist and not take chances in incurring the displeasure of so influential a scholar.

"How do I know? How do I know?" exploded the so influential a scholar. "Why, why, it must have an idea in it! Am I not offended?"

Offended! Alas! "The greatest drama of the decade." Alack! "The uncommon-

lymagnificent play produced last night in Plainfield, New Jersey." Not a moment was to be lost. Not a moment! A newspaper reviewer, absolutely honest, although one equally notorious for the fact that not once in all the years he has been writing of the theater has he commended a single seriously themed play where the theme was not coated with the sugar of sentimentality, was solicited. This reviewer, in quiet voice and concordant dignity, told the management it was his notion that the idea of the play would displease many persons because of its seditious *lèse majesté*, and advised its withdrawal. Whereupon the panic that had invaded the managers became double-plied. And the floor of the lobby became the nervous scene of a Brobdingnagian expectoration. And there was much biting into cigar butts. And the rumble of confused parts of speech sounded in the night air. And such diphthongs as the "oi" in "noise" reverberated in a ceaseless wail of repetition.

The opinions of several actresses, two additional theatrical managers and similar assiduous pew tenants were hastily invoked, and each of these chaste intellectuals proclaimed the news that they had gone pale before the awful, blasphemous idea. Four Jews made speed to inform the management that the discussion of Christianity had shocked them terribly. Mr. Broadhurst, an already wealthy native playwright, became so excited that he lifted his voice in a Wagnerian rumble against the sauciness of any outsider, particularly a critic, having dared to introduce a thought into the American theater. Mr. Forbes, author of "The Commuters," "The Traveling Salesman," *et cetera*, ran around the lobby in circles, as if in a delirium. Toxen Worm, the handsome publicity agent for the Shuberts' Hippodrome, tossed about like some great craft of the Atlantic, bumping bellies with the proletariat in a vain endeavor to reach a mooring, a harbor of safety. Herr Pulvermacher, the accomplished critic of the *Staats-Zeitung*, missed being rammed by the fraction of an inch. And the critic of the Brooklyn *Eagle*, fighting

to express *his* idea of the sacrilegious exhibition that had just taken place on the stage, became so mixed up in the incensed concourse of lobbyists that he put on the good James Metcalfe's eyeglasses, suspended nearby on a black cord, in the belief that they were his own. Strong men turned away their faces. It must have been an awful night at sea for the poor sailors!

From the vantage point of a hospitable saloon, we watched the unabating fury as it flowed from lobby to sidewalk and ebbed from sidewalk back into lobby—Burns Mantle, critic for the *Mail*, Sherwin, critic for the *Globe*, Colleague Mencken and I—with periodic dropings-in on the part of Signor Klauber, critic for the *Times*. My svelte associate in these pages sought now and again to distract us with the latest recherché boudoir mot—but no use. The sight of the havoc that had been aroused was of sufficient jocoseness for one evening. . . . The six scheming scalawags had guessed aright.

And this is the first article in the deduced magazine series.

The Princess has been advertised as a sort of American Grand Guignol. O tempora! O Maurey! What must the estimable Max, director of the theater in the Rue Chaptal over the seas, think of the designation? But probably he only smiles to himself at the adjective "American" placed before Grand Guignol. As well speak of American Pilsener, American champagne, American wit, American drama. The two words are, thus far in the era of life, impossible of conjunction.

Leaving Monsieur Max's thoughts aside for the moment, let us bestow an ear on one or two nearer home. Thus, then, the *Chicago Tribune*:

. . . a powerful tragedy with an idea barred from a "theater of ideas." But then, a "theater of ideas" is probably the last place to look for a play with an idea!

Thus, then, the *New York Globe*:

If a man were to open a hotel for "respectable" people and then proceed to exclude all those whose respectability was least open to question, you would naturally form the conclusion that he was a lunatic. And yet, when a company of theatrical managers open a the-

ater, which they proudly announce as a "theater of ideas," and then proceed to discard, after one evening's performance, the only play on the programme that contains a real idea, they seem to consider themselves and be considered by many others as prudent and sensible men. In such a position are the managers of the Princess Theater.

Thus, then, the *Baltimore Sun* (in small part):

Once more a fair young scheme for the uplift of the drama has gone to pot—this time at the Princess Theater in the city of New York. When the Princess was opened, a year or so ago, it was announced that the house would be given over to one-act plays with ideas in them, and there were many promising references to the success of similar enterprises abroad, particularly in Paris, Stockholm and Moscow. But at the first hint of protest from "right-thinking" numskulls the management has beaten a precipitate and preposterous retreat. Hereafter, one may be sure, the Princess will be devoted to "sound" and "elevating" dramas exclusively. That is to say, no idea will be launched on its stage which will not command itself at once, and with no argument save the bare statement, to all persons who regard Ibsen as a pornographer and George Bernard Shaw as a devil.

Thus, then, the *New York Times*, as retort to the dreadfully shocked brethren:

An infidel might, indeed, even find as much ground for his arguments in the hopelessness breathed in Longfellow's "Evangeline" as in "The Eternal Mystery."

Thus, then, the *New York Mail*, likening the thing suppressed to the thing which was made to supplant it:

. . . as strong drink compared to milk and water.

And thus again, the *Globe*:

Now that the Princess Theater has repented and become respectable, it would be unkind to direct much attention to it. Obscurity is the better part of respectability, and oblivion is usually the penitent's goal. To be sure, the Princess Theater may retort that this is hardly the sort of goal for a theater. To which the obvious answer is that a theater with a policy has no business repenting of it; for by so doing it earns the contempt of everybody—principally, mark you, of those critics who abused the policy in the first place. The theater that starts out with the policy originally proclaimed by the Princess has it within its power to become the most brilliant and interesting theater of English speaking countries—granted one asset. That asset is courage, the courage to ignore the namby-pamby chorus of "good taste, good taste, good taste"—like a flock of old maids crying in the wilderness—the courage to be in-

different to the possibility of offending people who wouldn't go inside such a theater, whether they are offended or not. Such courage, however, is not forthcoming at present.

* * *

For such persons as care no longer for Shakespeare in the theater, there is, in the main, usually no safer refuge than a modern Shakespearean theatrical production. Such a production is generally so successful in the irrepleviable obfuscation of Shakespeare that one may visit attendance upon the same with a sense of perfect security. It came, therefore, as something of a shock to learn that the Shuberts had so challenged the box office as to dedicate their new theater with the performance by Johnston Forbes Robertson of "HAMLET" which, as the British professor of criticism has phrased it, is not at all unlike Shakespeare's play of the same name.

Of Robertson, it is only necessary to repeat at this late hour that he is everything most actors are not, which is to say, an actor. Although, notwithstanding this, he is of course unable to bring to "Hamlet" or to any other play anything the author has not already given it, he is yet a true artist of the theater, if only for the reason that he well and deeply appreciates and understands this fact and seeks not to gut it. We hear much of actors "interpreting Shakespeare in accordance with their own particular ideas," the result usually being John Drew or Frank Keenan instead of Shakespeare. This man Robertson bravely interprets Shakespeare in accordance with *Shakespeare's* own particular ideas: the result being an unoffending and completely intelligent performance. That any actor—even so admirable an one as Robertson—is thus able so completely to subjugate his vanity as not to interfere with Shakespeare and gratuitously intrude his assistance upon the Bard, is a phenomenon worthy of the note which the critics of the Anglo-Saxon circle have bequeathed it. In each of the plays of his repertoire, this same quality of gentlemanly non-interference with the artist who has created the plays is evident on

Robertson's part. Indeed, he is even so careful as to pronounce the lines of the artist accurately. When he goes from us, a genuine sadness will fall upon our little world, for he presents to us one of the few Anglo-Saxon "stars" who is sufficiently the linguist to be able to speak the English language, one of the few remaining classical actors—classical (as defined in "Dramatic Opinions") meaning one who can present a dramatic hero as a man whose passions are those which have produced the philosophy, the poetry, the art and the statecraft of the world, and not merely those which have produced its weddings, coroners' inquests and executions. A white mark, Saint Peter, for the Shuberts!

The presentation in the theater by Arthur Hopkins of Longfellow's "EVANGELINE" has turned out to be so sanguinary and useless a procedure, so inauspicious another tournament with one of our alleged native literary landmarks, that attention need be directed to it for one reason alone. Here is the sort of exhibition that is always being recommended to school children, the theory in point evidently being that it is eminently appropriate and inspiring for school children to attend all plays derived from familiar library sources, provided only the plays are sufficiently bad. Thus it has come about that our school children are annually inveigled into witnessing the treasures of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa M. Alcott, Lew Wallace, *et al.*, in the belief that, in so doing, they may improve their little minds and "learn to love our American literature." And what the eventual result? When the school children grow up, they discover that their intellects have been so misguided that they begin involuntarily either to attend all the "American dramas" of Jules Eckert Goodman—or to write them. Or, if all interest in the theater has been abrogated through the early theatrical advice which they followed, they stay at home and read the stories of Mabel Herbert Urner or, if they wish particularly to dismiss the theater from their minds, Brander Matthews's essays on the theater in *Munsey's Magazine*.

The headmost objection to the so-called Manchester school of drama, represented anew in our midst by "THE YOUNGER GENERATION" of Stanley Houghton, lies in the circumstance that it reproduces life so precisely that it is correspondingly tedious. Curiously enough, when a dramatist seeks to transfer a cross-section of life to the stage he invariably selects an enormously dull aspect of life for his maneuver. Thus it comes about that our so and inappropriately named dramatic "slices of life" always—or almost always—are boresome theatrical visitings with persons who would be equally boresome out of the theater. It is an obsession on the part of the playmakers that "slices of life" exist only in the drab regions of the world and among drab personages. The argument that a capable dramatist can take such a region and such a set of characters and make them interesting is also a good argument, good, however, because it echoes exactly what I have here sought to infer: that, to make them interesting, he has had to rescue them from the monotonous level of actuality and thus prevent them from being humdrum. Life requires the touch of the imaginative artist, the imaginative philosopher, to make it theatrically palatable. The difficulty here is that so many of the "imaginative artists" of the playmaking world, when they seek to lodge life entertainingly behind the footlights, touch it with an illogical and disassociated imagination. They invent electricity in a gashouse. Life as life goes is a very colorless affair—at two dollars a seat.

Mr. Houghton's most recently divulged piece, notwithstanding the certain monotony that is inherent to most of these Manchester plays, yet persists as a worthier and sincerer endeavor than his trumped-up "Hindle Wakes" of yesterseason. His character sketching is swift and sure and, if his philosophies are of the obvious and already oft chronicled variety, his composite work still carries an air infrequently to be sensed in the British provincial theater. The current play twangs again the string of youth's gradual revolt through

successive generations against the despotic blindness of age and, in one of its characters—a lad in the wanderlust hour of youth—reveals in fugitive instants the touch Conradian.

The two new Barrie playlets, "HALF AN HOUR" and "THE WILL" by name, somehow do not appall me with their enchantments. The former impresses me as little more than a Henry Arthur Jones vaudeville, the skeletonizing of one of Henry's less exemplary products. I detect in it none of the amazing qualities that have been claimed in its behalf. It comes to my ear as the perfectly conventional melodramatic triangle delicatessen dished up in three quick doses. Wife, cruel husband, sympathetic lover; lover killed, husband's suspicions pacified, wife back in the old situation. From first to last it smells to heaven of the theater. Miss Grace George redeems the proceedings with her admirable art. As for "THE WILL," it caresses my nostrils with a more wooing perfume—although here, neither, am I dismayed before any of the alleged wonders. A sort of "Milestones" with money as the pursuing villain, the little play discloses now and again the Barrie of another day, the Barrie with his hand on the heart of humanity and in his eye ever a tear for humanity's frailties, but these moments of charm are invaded by the Barrie of today, the Barrie in the catamenial stages of uncertainty.

One of the most jovial customs of a certain clearly defined stratum of our Broadway playmakers is the habit of unconsciously confusing the United States of America with Jack's. These gentlemen, saturated with the sane viewpoint and profound principles of Broadway, are responsible for the majority of what the billboards announce as "American plays." An "American play" usually means a play that proves beyond all doubt and amidst wild alarms and excursions that every American married woman whose husband cannot afford to purchase expensive clothes for her is ready at the drop of the hat to go out and earn the clothes with her body. Other themes of these "American plays" go to prove conclusively that every

American husband who is not a teetotaler regularly beats up his wife and that every poor American girl who marries a rich American man is destined to have a perfectly miserable time of it. A second and equally jocose custom prevalent among this lodge is the habit of believing that the "difference between the written and the spoken word" is a matter of bad grammar, that no American speaks anything but slang. In the minds of this *sängerbund*, such a dialogic line as "Gee, you say that guy's not old! Why, Bo, he pulled stroke when Washington crossed the Delaware!" (from the "American play" called "Today"), is eminently to be admired over the "literary" lines written by such dramatic ignoramus as Pinero, Galsworthy, Knoblauch, Molnar, Hervieu and Shaw. "That sort of writing is all right for books, but it isn't there with the goods for the drama," is the Broadway religion. The Broadway dialogic ideal is something "snappy," like this:

He: I said "No"!

SHE: Well, you needn't be nasty, kiddo! You got a disposition like a elephant with the diabetes.

He: Aw, close your word organ!

SHE: Oh, how can you treat me thus, Sam?

He: Who said anythin' about treatin'?

SHE: H'm, you can't put me off with wit!

He (starting in to destroy the *bric-a-brac*): Put you off! Put you off!! By God, I'll show you what I'll put you off with! Etc., etc.

I have made reference to one of these exhibits, "TODAY," designated as "An American play by two American authors with an American cast." The patriotic fervor of such pronunciamentos! The piece in point is the usual farrago of false Broadway philosophy, mouthing by way of sortie such deep and startling revolutionary ideas as "In America, they don't ask how you get the money; all they want to know is if you've got it!" Such theatrical sweetmeats are not for the serious critic of sincere drama.

When David Belasco chases Herr Morton Prince and Old Doc Hyslop out of his back yard and sets himself to the honest business of putting on a good show in place of an assemblage of hysterical psychological nonsense given

the name of drama, he finds me pounding my palms in his honor along with the rest of the less intelligent population. And in his revival of "THE AUCTIONEER," he has done just this thing: for, though this play is, critically, about as weak a specimen as one can summon to mind, he has contrived out of it such an excellent entertainment, such an illuminated, unaffected evening, that the innocent charm of the proceedings is entirely soothing and captivating. Give David Belasco a play of in consequence, a play like "THE AUCTIONEER," and there is no man in the Anglo-Saxon theater to match his talents in creating out of such a futile product a pacific and bewitching night in the playhouse. The much advertised Granville Barker is herein a tyro compared with him. More's the pity, therefore, that this talented man does not seriously concern himself with such wares as will bring to him the same credit for sound and sober dramatic judgment as is already his in this infinitely lesser and artistically more pointless direction.

The trouble with most of the villains in our native drama is that they are heroes. The curious, sentimentalized, jejune viewpoint of the general run of our theatrical scriveners is such that a mountebank morality and philosophy urge themselves into their characters, with the result that the aforesaid characters frequently impress the separative spectator in an entirely different manner than their creators intended they should. Indeed, every now and then I discover that, by closing my eyes and considering the "villain" of the piece in the place of the "hero" and vice versa, with their speeches analogously changed about, I am enabled to enjoy one of these plays and its thematic evolution intelligently and satisfactorily. A villain, by the world's definition of him, is one whose actions are hostile to society in the light of the mental attitudes of that section of society in which he is in the immediate process of moving. Therefore when, as in the theater, the section of society into which the villainous character is cast reveals no mental

attitudes of any kind—save a blind and unsubstantiated attitude against the villain (who is called a villain arbitrarily for the demands of the play)—the villain, being the only person in the crowd with an idea in his head, to me forthwith becomes the hero.

In our drama, any man is regarded as a villain who

1. Acts like a normal, sensible, healthy man in the presence of a woman, provided only the latter be an ass.
2. Says anything that diverges even remotely from what is accepted as the truth by nine-tenths of the population that patronizes the theater.
3. Views his wife as a partner and companion in fortune and misfortune, instead of a partner and companion only in the former.
4. Wears good clothes.
5. Marries, or desires to marry, a rich girl for her money.
6. Is not liked by the hero.
7. Is not an American.

For the past six months, I have been working on a small book which will, when completed, prove definitively, I believe, that were the "hero" and "villain" characters in point turned about—each labeled with the other's name—the device would immeasurably improve the thematic values of four out of every five of our attempted serious American plays. Even in the case of so excellent a drama as "The Easiest Way," the villain is actually, in close analysis, found to be the hero. While in such vastly inferior products as "The Lion and the Mouse," the confusion in virtues is perfectly patent to anyone with half an eye or quarter an education in logic. The adjective "sympathetic," when attributed to one of the leading characters in the native drama, is generally applied in all seriousness by playwright, public and critic to the particular character in the cast who is most objectionable to the thinking individual.

In view of these catastrophes, it comes as something of a relief to lay an eye on such an unpretending, old-

fashioned and wholly frank melodrama as George Scarborough's "AT BAY," in which the hero may easily be spotted by virtue of the fact that he is an Irishman and the villain by virtue of the fact that he is not. There probably never was a melodrama containing an Irishman in which the Irishman was not the hero. According to the rules of the stage, an Irishman is either a hero or a songbird. Among all the nations of the earth, Ireland is America's only strong competitor in the way of dramatic brave souls. These Irish heroes are generally "lovable adventurers" with a penchant for backing up against doors leading into rooms in which beautiful ladies have taken refuge and coolly defying regiments of exotic rascals to dare seek to enter.

The villain in "AT BAY" is a villain after one's own heart. In the first place, he is a lawyer.

Give me these old-time melodramas wherein murders are simply and candidly committed with paper cutters and billfiles instead of through such intricate and suspicious modern dramatic dodges as auto-suggestion and arquebusade, hypnotism and mystic artillery. Give me these old-time melodramas wherein Mr. Damn U. J. Harkness remains to be clearly identified as the villain to the end of the evening instead of, as in our "improved" psychological melodramas, convincing one by quarter of nine that he is really the one authentic virtuous celebrity in the aggregation. Give me these old-time melodramas wherein climaxes are wrought in terms of bare knuckles and round oaths instead of in terms of Morty Prince and Oliver Lodge. And if it be, as rumor saith, that Augustus Thomas has exercised a collaborative hand in the making of "AT BAY," to him the compliments of the season! "The repentant sinner shall be welcomed back into the fold and upon the head of him shall be laid forgiveness."



THE RUSSIANS

By H. L. Mencken

IF there were a general court martial for the trial of literary critics, I dare say that William Dean Howells would be condemned to the hulks for his vice of discovering bad poets and worse novelists. How many and many, alas and alas, has he palmed off upon Miss Jeannette L. Gilder and the confiding woman's club! My memory of the old *Critic* (later *Putnam's* and now no more) is of an endless succession of glittering and gaseous geniuses, each bearing his archiepiscopal imprimatur, each greeted with respectful huzzahs by the cornfed reviewers. A credulous youth, I read them all, bartering my taffy money for their windy tomes. Now and then, of course, a genuine discovery was concealed among them—a Frank Norris, let us say, or an Edith Wharton, or a William Vaughn Moody. But set against these true Thomases that long file of exhumed and accoladed second-raters, beginning with some forgotten Swinburne of the seventies and ending with the W. B. Trites of yesterday! And set against them, too, the real arrivals that the genial lookout missed—the Shaws, George Moores, Dreisers, Synges, Galsworthys, Phillips and George Ades! Alack, it remained for lesser searchers—Pollard, Meltzer, Reedy, Huneker—to sight the new and shining faces! The Dean was giving lawn parties to false Kiplings and quasi-Merediths: he missed the main parade; he was dozing when the elephants went by.

Indict him, find him guilty, and order him to the hulks—but then straightway pardon him and give three cheers for him! Say what you will against him, you must always collide with the fact that

he discovered the Russians—and when he discovered the Russians he did a capital service to the English novel. It was suffering, in those later Victorian days, from an excess of sugar, a severe psychical diabetes. Hardy was a lone and gloomy peak; Gissing was yet a mere foothill, a young and unnoticed hummock. The rest were busily avoiding the harsh and "unpleasant" facts of life; the aim of one and all of them, not even excepting Meredith, was to treat the human riddle pleasantly, agreeably, facetiously; the novel dealt with manners more than with men. It was the high privilege of Mr. Howells to let a sharp wind from the steppes into this perfumed and stuffy room, to show the profound and ruthless art of Turgenev and Dostoyevsky beside the puny home craft of these effeminate fictioneers. In brief, he blew a blast for realism, and that blast is echoing still. I do not say that realism conquered; all I do say is that it now exists, that it has exponents and partisans, that it has become almost as honorable to tell the truth in a novel as to say a pretty thing.

This realism was founded, not by Emile Zola, but by Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol, the Russian, who died while Zola was still a schoolboy. But it was not Gogol himself, but his two great disciples, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky, who lifted it to epic dignity, and made it the life blood of the modern novel. Their influence in their own country was immediate and enormous: what we know as romance, indeed, has never since held any sort of foothold in Russia. And in Western Europe, especially in France and Scandinavia, they made an impression almost as deep. The soil had been

prepared for them there: the French had been groping toward nature, both in the drama and in the novel, since the "Cromwell" of Victor Hugo. Zola was already at work when Turgenev wrote "Smoke." The great battle for "naturalism" in the seventies had its origin in the skirmish over "La Dame aux Camélias" in 1852. But in the English speaking countries, as in Germany, there was need for elucidation and propaganda. Tradition was against this new form of fiction, with its prying into dark places, its disregard of petty conventions and moralities, its lack of all purpose save truth telling. It was Mr. Howells who first gave it the support of a critic of position, and who first argued for its naturalization. His own experiments, cautious as they were, focused attention upon the matter: you oldsters remember what a sensation he made when he set down the fact that one of his heroines, emerging from the kitchen for a *scène à faire*, smelled of fried chicken. A humorous example of the new realism, almost a *reductio ad absurdum*, but yet a significant event in the history of the English novel.

It would be absurd, of course, to say that this Russian born realism has conquered in England and America, or even in France and Germany. As a matter of fact, there have been several violent reactions against it, and the persons who now practise it unwisely are preparing the way for another. But at all events, it remains a present and potent influence, it has a powerful party behind it. Such a book as Howells's "The Rise of Silas Lapham" would cause no stir to-day. We have grown accustomed to the idea that a novel which pretends to do no more than describe human beings as they are has a sufficient excuse for existence. Novels of that sort, true enough, are still vastly outnumbered by saccharine and dehumanized romances, but it is no longer necessary to explain them and apologize for them. When Arnold Bennett wrote "The Old Wives' Tale" it won recognition at once. Dreiser's "Sister Carrie," suppressed by a donkeyish publisher, forced its way to the front in spite of him. Frank Norris

didn't have to wait with "McTeague"; George Moore found an audience ready for "A Mummer's Wife"; the ancient De Morgan made an immediate success with his English variations upon Dostoyevskian themes. Joseph Conrad, a romancer superficially, is a stern and penetrating realist at bottom—a true Slav in artistic theory as he is in blood. In brief, we have begun to judge fiction, not by its mere power to smooth and caress, but by its essential reality; and that new criterion is the one by which we separate our novelists of depth and beam from those who are no more than idle scratchers of the surface. No sane man would argue today that Robert Louis Stevenson was a greater novelist than Emile Zola. And yet there was a time when the man who denied it was a man who forfeited all claim to intellectual respectability.

Even today, of course, not many Americans are disposed to admit, with Dr. William Lyon Phelps, that "Russian fiction, like German music, is the best in the world." But that hesitation is chiefly due, I suppose, to two obstacles to fair judgment. One is the fact that our romantic newspapers, interpreting ignorantly the political troubles of the Russian people, depict them as a race of primitive and bloodthirsty barbarians, as little capable of civilized self-expression as the Yaquis or the Arkansans. The other is that comparatively few of the greater Russian works, particularly of the past two decades, have been translated into English, and that most of the translations which actually exist are atrociously bad. The first difficulty must wait upon slow-moving events for its removal; the second gives promise of being resolved more expeditiously, in part by the publication of better translations (that of Dostoyevsky, undertaken by the Macmillans, is a good example), and in part by the appearance of such sound and informative critical works as Dr. Phelps's "Essays on Russian Novelists," and Serge Persky's "CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN NOVELISTS," done into English by Frederick Eiscmann (*Luce*). Dr. Phelps's book, published two years ago, covers the whole

history of the novel in Russia, and is made doubly valuable by an exhaustive bibliography. M. Persky's is restricted in scope to men now living (with Anton Tchekoff, who died recently, as an exception), but that very restriction, of course, makes for a more careful treatment in detail, and allows the author to go at greater length into the arguments and purposes of individual works.

Why are the Russians such great artists? And why do they cast their whole weight upon the side of realism, disdaining the soothing fantasy for the merciless fact? M. Persky finds the answer to both questions in their history during the past century. They are great artists because they have looked up, and realists because they have looked down—a paradox which loses all its paradoxical quality when it is examined. Russian art, at least until very recently, has been exclusively in the hands of an enlightened minority of the lesser aristocracy. This enlightened minority—the so-called *intelligentsia*—has been led into revolt against Russian medievalism by contact with Western culture, and in consequence it has felt that bitter mood of longing from which all great art springs. But at the same time its deepest feelings have been aroused, not by its own sufferings and handicaps, but by those of the vast and inert masses below it—the brutish but kindly commonalty of the realm—the innumerable horde of inarticulate hewers and drawers. Actual contact has fostered that sympathy: the Russian of the landed caste, like our landed Southerners before the war, is on intimate and affectionate terms with the peasantry. As a boy, he played with peasant boys; as a man, he is friend and father to his flock. The result is that the representative impulse, when it seizes him at all, is an impulse to set down the lowly annals of the poor. If he is a Borodin or a Glinka, he delves into folk music and becomes, like Dvorák, a *Bauer im Frack*—a peasant in a dress coat. And if he is a Dostoyevsky or a Gorky, he gives over his books to the little things which make up the lives of little people. In brief, he becomes a realist. Romance deals grandly

with grander beings. As M. Persky says, its concern is with dukes, millionaires, magnificoes. But you will find no dukes and millionaires in Russian fiction. Its standard hero is a man like Zola's Etienne Lantier, a slave struggling against insuperable shackles, a Prometheus of the chandala.

M. Persky's book is obviously the work of a man who knows the latter day Russian novelists at first hand and with profound intimacy. In this respect, of course, he has an immense advantage over Dr. Phelps, whose knowledge of them has been filtered through German and French translations. But in the main his estimate of their relative importance follows that of the American very closely. He is less deceived by the sensational success of Artsybachev's "Sanine" and he is more appreciative of such men as Kuprin, Andreyev, Veressayev and the very un-Russian Merezhkovsky, but he has the same high praise for the delicate and exquisite art of Tchekoff and for the revolutionary dramatic experiments of Gorky. It is an astonishing thing that the books and plays of these men are so little known in England and America. In Germany they are read by everyone pretending to a sound taste in letters, and in France such men as Turgenev and Dostoyevsky have become so thoroughly naturalized that they are almost regarded as Frenchmen. It was as Frenchmen, indeed, that they awakened the fevers in George Moore and Arnold Bennett, both of whom have testified to their inspirational influence. But the average novel reader of the English speaking countries still knows little about them, and their lesser successors remain mere names. A book of Tchekoff's plays, translated a short while ago, aroused but feeble interest; Andreyev's astounding "The Seven Who Were Hanged" was patronized as a shocker; Veressayev's "Memoirs of a Physician," a capital piece of self-revelation, is read by a few physicians and no one else. Certainly there is room here for a better acquaintance and a better understanding. M. Persky's entertaining little book, I believe, will bring both.

Dr. Ludwig Lewisohn has many hard nuts to crack in the second volume of his authorized English version of the DRAMATIC WORKS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN (*Huebsch*), for most of the characters in the three plays he tackles speak dialects of unearthly obscurity, difficult to understand in the first place and lacking even approximate English equivalents in the second place. I open the original text of "Die Ratten," for example, and find the following on page 21:

Ick wer' woll immer jejen de janze Welt . . . noch wai! . . . wer' ick der Potsdammer sind.

This in the mouth of a Berlin thug. What the deuce does it mean? Dr. Lewisohn, despairing of rendering the idiom in the first sentence, and giving up the Potsdamer altogether, makes it "Aw, what d'you think? Is I goin' to be a dam' fool?" By this, no doubt, the sense is acceptably conveyed, and there is even some indication of the general ignorance of the speaker, but certainly you will not find any English speaking thug, either in England or America, using the third person form of "to have" or "to be" with the singular pronoun in the first person. That is an error confined to the negro dialect on this side of the water, and to certain fantastic rural dialects on the other side. Our city bullies never say "I is"—they always say "I am," even when the rest of their discourse murders number, tense and gender in cold blood. And yet Dr. Lewisohn constantly employs this unnatural and obtrusive locution, not only in "The Rats," but also in "Drayman Henschel" and "Rose Bernd." "You has to die some day," says Rose on page 250. "I has to gasp for air," says Henschel on page 144. And in the mouth of the talkative Frau John, in "The Rats," I find the following:

"How long has we been married, Paul?"

"Where has you been?"

"You don't has to go an' open the windows an' cry out."

"We c'n has a child this way."

The first and second examples may perhaps pass muster, but assuredly the third and fourth are wholly unimaginable. And in various other ways Dr. Lewisohn gives further indication of his

difficulties in devising a satisfactory English dialect. For example, in "Many a time I've sat here and axed myself." Why not "Many a time I've set here and ast myself"—or, for English consumption, "arst myself"? But here, no doubt, my objection begins to grow pedantic, and besides, Dr. Lewisohn's sufficient excuse begins to appear in it. The task before him was to turn a dozen recalcitrant and conflicting German dialects into an English dialect that would pass muster in both England and the United States, for his translations are published in both countries. That task was full of perplexities, and many of them, it must be said in fairness, he has met with extraordinary ingenuity. The so-called *soziale dramen* of Hauptmann deal almost exclusively with the hinds of the countryside and the riffraff of the towns, and the speech of these ruffians is sometimes almost unbelievably obscure. In the case of "Die Weber," indeed, it was too much for the Germans themselves, and Hauptmann had to print a version of the play in an easier dialect. In "Die Ratten" there is less difficulty, once the reader gets through the first dozen pages, but even so there are innumerable snares of idiom, slang and mispronunciation. By what perversion of Grimm's law do Frau John and her friends soften every "g" to a "j," and turn the sputtering German "ich" into the clicking "ick," and reduce all the articles to "de"? What panting student will bowl into "jejend," "Jott," "janx" and "Der Junge ist jut" without pronouncing a hearty curse upon Herr Hauptmann?

As for the plays themselves, they are grim pictures of the sordid lives of poor folk. In "Drayman Henschel" we see a village teamster in the clutches of a scheming and vixenish second wife. Robbed and dishonored, he finally hangs himself. In "Rose Bernd" we have the tragedy of a young peasant girl who is betrayed and deserted. When her child is born she strangles it, and as the curtain falls she is in the clutches of the law. In "The Rats" we are in the midst of a tragicomedy in low life, the whole revolving around the grotesque personality of Frau John, a charwoman. Childless,

she palms off the abandoned child of a street girl upon her easy-going husband. When the deception is denounced and the child is taken away from her, she kills herself. Two suicides and a murderer! A grisly company, to be sure! But there is good, at bottom, in every one of these suffering brutes. Henschel is an honest and worthy man, even a man of ideals: it is their destruction, indeed, which brings about his own. Frau John is a liar and a thief, but there is still a lot of womanly tenderness in her, and her love for her half-dead foster-child is real and moving. And poor little Rose Bernd, though she kills her baby, would have been a good girl, one feels sure, with half a chance. As the curtain falls upon her a yokel who has loved her pronounces her apology and absolution: "*Das Mädel—was muss die gelitten han!*"—"The lass—how she must have suffered!"

My advice is that you read these plays of Hauptmann, with those that are to follow and those that have gone before. His mood is not always tragic and depressing, despite his liking for depicting the miserable hoggishness of the poor. In "The Weavers" he wrings the heart and in "Before Sunrise" his people are almost revolting, but he has humor, too, and "The Beaver Coat" and "The Conflagration" (literally, "The Red Rooster") are bouncing comedies of character. No other dramatist of today, in truth, has made experiments in so many forms as Hauptmann. He has swung from the most painstaking realism to high flights of fancy, from such things as "Before Sunrise" and "The Rats" to such things as "Hannele" and "The Sunken Bell," and he has scored distinguished successes in both directions. In addition, he has written comedies that verge upon farce, and problem plays comparable to Ibsen's, and historical tragedies in the grand manner. It is as if the comic talents of George Bernard Shaw were combined with the keen tragic sense of John Galsworthy, the easy virtuosity of Pinero and the poetic imagination of Barrie. There can be no doubt whatever that the man is the foremost living

dramatist. A small party in Germany is disposed to question his claims, but that party is pledged to playwrights whose debt to him is enormous. He is the father of the realistic drama in his native land, and he is also the father of the new romantic drama. Set his work beside that of Sudermann, and the best of Sudermann begins to seem artificial and old-fashioned. And in no other country is there a playmaker worthy to be put in rivalry with him, not even in France. Mr. Huebsch and Dr. Lewisohn deserve thanks for undertaking the extremely arduous enterprise of opening his whole canon to readers who are dismayed by the original.

Of the other published plays of the month the most interesting is "PROFESSOR BERNHARDI," by Arthur Schnitzler, the Viennese, translated and adapted by Mrs. Emil Pohli (*Elder*). Mrs. Pohli has taken the rather amazing liberty of reducing the play to a bare skeleton. According to her own statement, indeed, three-fourths of it is left out in her English version! Not having the original at hand, I am unable to say whether she has done this heroic surgery prudently, but what she offers is pretty dull stuff. It tells the story of a pious campaign against one Professor Bernhardi, the Jewish chief of a small hospital in Vienna. The Professor has a girl patient who is dying, but she believes she is getting well and he wants her to continue in that blest delusion to the end. Therefore he refuses admittance to a priest who wants to go to her bedside and offer her the last consolations of the church. The priest denounces him, he is jailed for an insult to religion, and his license to practise is taken away. An interesting and even exciting story in Vienna—the censor there, in fact, refused to permit the play—but one that does not do much execution in the breasts of Americans. A stage book of more genial and less hortatory cut is "MY WANDERINGS," by Henry Clay Barnabee, the founder and bright star of the Bostonians (*Chapple*). The volume is full of jokes out of Joe Miller—why do all comedians tell such bad ones when they seize their pens in

hand?—but the story of that greatest of light opera troupes is unique and worth hearing, and here it is given in great detail and there are many portraits of the charming ladies, now fat and forgotten, who made its every performance an enchantment.

Various serious and instructive books, each designed to make the world better and death less welcome. For example, "NERVOUS BREAKDOWNS AND How to AVOID THEM," by Dr. Charles D. Musgrove (*Funk-Wagnalls*). It is a humane sort of prophylaxis that Dr. Musgrove preaches, for there is no hint of asceticism in it. Be moderate, careful, sensible, he says—and nature will do the rest. Don't eat a dish you detest on the ground that it kept your granduncle alive to eighty-six: eat whatever pleases you and agrees with you. Have your teeth filed and plugged at regular intervals by a dentist with an entertaining flow of conversation; chew all sinews and ligaments before you swallow them; come up for air between courses; keep away from Masonic banquets; postpone the golden buck until the breakfast of the morning after; take a cold shower every day; keep your windows open at night; have some fixed time for going to bed; take a long walk now and then; avoid morphine, cocaine and the betel nut; cultivate a hobby. Searching Dr. Musgrove's book with eagle eye, I fail to find any specific prohibition to alcohol. He counsels extreme caution in its use, but I doubt that he would object to an occasional drop of yellow chartreuse after dinner or a couple of seidels of Pilsener on Saturday night. But don't try to drink it all! The distilleries seldom run to their full capacity. Even supposing that you and your fellow Elks should sneak upon them and empty them tomorrow, they could put on extra night shifts next day and beat you by the end of the week. The thing has been tried, but never with success. The shores of time are strewn with the snoring carcasses of men who have fallen in the attempt. And here and there you will find the pathetic remains of a fair young *saufschwester*, her life sacrificed to the feminist movement in ethylic athletics.

The aim of Charles T. Sprading, in "LIBERTY AND THE GREAT LIBERTARIANS," seems to be to give aid and comfort to those poor devils who are now pursued with squirt and smuthound by Anthony Comstock and his fellow archangels. Things have come to such a pass in the United States that it is dangerous for any man to say anything or do anything that is not taught officially in the newspapers and Sunday schools. As I put down these lines, the whole military and naval forces of the republic are arrayed against Mitchell Kennerley for publishing Dr. Daniel Carson Goodman's "Hagar Revelly," which I commended to your careful reading two months ago. Mr. Comstock objects to it, so I hear, on the ground that, in one chapter, Hagar lays plans for what the newspapers call a criminal operation. (Oh, the verbal niceness of our public journals! Oh, "interesting condition"! Oh, "statutory offense"!) This operation, it may be said, is never performed, but Anthony is horrified nevertheless, and so Kennerley faces an expensive adventure in the courts, with no redress under our barbarous laws for so tartuffian an attack upon his time, his bank account and his good name. Every other publisher in the country lies open at all times to the same outrageous assault by mountebanks; in every American community there is a Comstock, and behind him stands an eager pack of old maids of both sexes. What is worse, this predatory prudery is spreading from the purely "moral" field—God save the mark!—into the political field. In New Jersey, not long ago, a man was sentenced to eleven years in the penitentiary for "inciting hostility to the government." Think of it—in "free America"—the land of free speech—the Paradise of the Declaration of Independence! It is to combat this intolerable destruction of the common rights of civilized white men that Dr. Sprading has put together his collection of protests—by John Stuart Mill, William Lloyd Garrison, Herbert Spencer, Abraham Lincoln, Henry David Thoreau and a score of other famous friends of liberty. Curiously enough, his book is published in

Los Angeles, the capital and bullpen of all that is vilest in American pharisaism.

Of the novels that I have managed to explore since our last meeting, the one that has offered the best entertainment is "JOAN THURSDAY," by Louis Joseph Vance (*Little-Brown*), an adventure into serious fiction by a gentleman hitherto engaged upon the manufacture of galvanic balderdash for the department stores. Let this Mr. Vance have praise for his reformation and a welcome in the lodge room. He proves anew what I have often maintained: that your successful maker of popular rubbish is usually a very clever craftsman, who could do sound work if he would. Arnold Bennett demonstrated it when he turned from frank thrillers to "The Old Wives' Tale"; David Graham Phillips, when he astonished the critics with "The Hungry Heart"; Richard Harding Davis, in "The Bar Sinister" and other short stories. (The contrary process is less common, but even more striking: witness Frank Norris's "Blix," the best sentimental story printed in America in the nineties.) Not, of course, that "JOAN THURSDAY" is a masterpiece, or even the rough draft of a masterpiece. But I think that you will find an honest striving for truth in it, and more than one passage of first rate writing. It is a study of the anthropagous type of women—the cold-blooded fair one who raises the pulses of men by a sort of natural magnetism, and then turns their fevers to her own profit. Joan takes a little flier into passion herself, but it is no more than a flier. When we say goodbye to her the last of her lovers has just departed this life by the hand of her predecessor in his affections. But she is too happy to mourn. The fellow's adoration has brought her opportunity on the stage, and she has just made a great success. Tears must wait upon press notices! . . . A somewhat grim and sardonic tale, reminiscent of "Sister Carrie," rough in its dealings with romance. Here and there a trace of the author's regular business hauls up the reader: a society matron who runs to loftiness and lorgnettes, an assistant

heroine named Venetia Tankerville! But in general he makes a creditable début, and it is sincerely to be hoped that he will put "The Brass Bowl" and its kind behind him, and stick to this new and lovelier last.

Robert W. Chambers, a man who could do excellent work if he would (in truth, he has often done it), lingers among the Gibson girls and boys in "THE BUSINESS OF LIFE" (*Appleton*), the tale of a prodigal young millionaire's therapeutic love for a brave and beauteous young business girl. The thing has its moments, and there is a grateful lack of that feeble facetiousness which made bosh of "The Gay Rebellion," but the critic of the Boston *Transcript* showed a keen sense of values when he wrote his review of it in doggerel. Plenty of other such trade goods on the counter—"HER HEART'S GIFT," by Oliver Kent (*Dillingham*), a Western nerve wracker with a mellow undercurrent of sex; "ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY," by Frederic S. Isham (*Bobbs-Merrill*), the story of a daring young devil who goes to Mecca on a bet; "THE SU-RA-KAR-TA," by William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer (*Small-Maynard*), and "DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND," by Jane Bunker (*Bobbs-Merrill*), both of which deal with gems of vast value, and with the trouble they bring to charming ladies and ferretlike detectives; and "MERRILIE DAWES," by Frank H. Spearman (*Scribner*), in which the heroine is one of those fabulously rich young women who unsettle the minds of all our telephone operators. Of the five tales here mentioned, the middle three are written with dexterity and aplomb, and Mr. Spearman's gathers no little momentum as it proceeds. Such stuff, indeed, is often done well in our happy land. We haven't many novelists who measure up to the second-raters of Europe, but we have a whole brigade of highly accomplished fictioneers.

Excellent small-town sketches are to be found in "AFTER MANY YEARS," by David Gibson (*Gibson Co.*), an Indianian with a full measure of the native gift for entertaining narrative. Some of these

sketches, true enough, are mere anecdotes, and others are very ineptly managed, but in the rest of them I find good style and a most agreeable flavor. Such things as "Bill's Day Off," "The Sporty Bachelor," "The Country Barber Shop" and "The Country Preacher" occupy the delightful border country between fiction and fact. One feels that Mr. Gibson has actually met and known the simple yokels he describes, and yet they are teased up a bit, as the artists say, and so raised from the particular to the typical. I commend this Mr. Gibson to our alert magazine editors. Here is a man with an eye for the humorous and a peculiarly unaffected and attractive style of writing, and yet all of his stuff is going into a little trade journal in Cleveland, and his book bears his own imprint. No doubt he has done many other such sketches. What publisher will rescue them from his old files?

Ian Hay's "HAPPY - GO - LUCKY" (*Houghton-Mifflin*) is an effort at farce, sometimes highly artificial and seldom very amusing. "THE GRINGOS," by B. M. Bower (*Little-Brown*), is a melodramatic romance of California in the days of the gold strike and *posse comitatus*. "THE BOOK OF EVELYN," by Geraldine Bonner (*Bobbs-Merrill*), offers a diverting contrast between a mouselike and shabby genteel little widow and a blatant and brazen opera singer. A wistful, appealing note is in it, and you will probably not regret the rainy Sunday you dedicate to it. "FATIMA," by Rowland Thomas (*Little-Brown*), is an attempt to add a new tale to the thousand and one of Scheherezade, and though it is marred by a singsong style, there is still enough Oriental gaudiness in its incidents to make it entertaining. "THE DESIRE OF THE MOTH," by Maxwell Gray (*Appleton*); "THE WORLD'S DAUGHTER," by Cyril Harcourt (*Lane*), and "DAVID MALCOLM," by Nelson Lloyd (*Scribner*), are all honest chronicles of amour, with the cruel fates blocking the happiness of the lovers. So are "THE HONORABLE MR. JAWNISH," by Jeffery Farnol (*Little-Brown*) and "THE GOLDEN HOLLOW," by Rena Carey Sheffield (*Lane*). In "THE POINT OF VIEW," by Elinor Glyn

(*Appleton*), we see the Rev. Eustace Medlicott and Count Roumovski at war for the hand of the beautiful Stella Rawson. The Rev. Mr. Medlicott is a virtuous English curate; the Count is an alumnus of Paris, Vienna and Berlin. Which wins Stella? What a question!

Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's "WESTWAYS" (*Century Co.*) is very slow in getting under way, but once the shadow of the Civil War begins to fall across the page its pace quickens, and before the end is reached there are a number of stirring battle scenes, including a truly thrilling picture of Gettysburg. The principal personages are John Penhallow, a retired army captain, settled on his estate in lower Pennsylvania, and his Southern wife, Ann Grey. At the call to arms John joins the colors, and is soon leading a regiment to the front, but Ann remains true to her Maryland tradition, and it is out of this conflict that the action of the book arises. Dr. Mitchell's invention is far from fertile: he adds little that is new to the old situation or to its orthodox resolution. But he is so steeped in Civil War history that his baldest description has something of the charm of personal narrative. The book, in brief, is second rate but workmanlike.

The same qualified praise, with variations, must go to "THE GARDEN WITHOUT WALLS," by Coningsby Dawson (*Holt*). Here we have a full length study of the spirit of youth in man—its fantasies, its painful gropings, its divine sensitiveness; above all, its lofty idealism. The first half is delightfully done: one gets very close, indeed, to the soul of a dreaming and impressionable boy. But the trouble with Dante Cardover, both as human being and as novel hero, is that he remains a boy too long. His idealism, after his nonage is behind him, passes over into sentimentality. In a word, he becomes a prig—and not man nor woman loveth a prig. When the fair Miss Fiesole, third of his three loves, lures him, invites him and then stands defeated before his ghastly virtue, the reader is apt to do exactly what Fiesole herself does—i. e., give him up in disgust. He is too good for this world. He is almost too good for a book.

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By Andrew H. Hamilton

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Health is a matter of conforming to the laws of right living. True grace of movement is the result of thorough bodily control—of making housework, or any work, an aid in securing this, instead of the cause of losing it. Beauty of Form is something that can be attained by anyone who will study and apply the knowledge gained. This has been proven in many different ways.

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Volumes have been written on various methods for developing the figure and attaining health and beauty, but the most interesting and attractive book I have ever read is one written and published by Miss Kellermann herself, entitled "The Body Beautiful." This book contains many photographs of Miss Kellermann and others, showing correct and incorrect carriage, how the body may be built up or reduced to normal, symmetrical lines, and various chapters dealing with every phase of health and body building.

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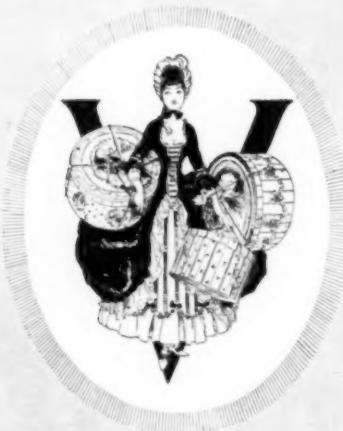
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John Adams Thayer, 2780 shares, 452 Fifth Avenue, N. Y.; Mark Lee Luther, 200 shares, 452 Fifth Avenue, N. Y.; W. H. Johnson, 20 shares, Philadelphia, Pa. Total, 3000 shares.

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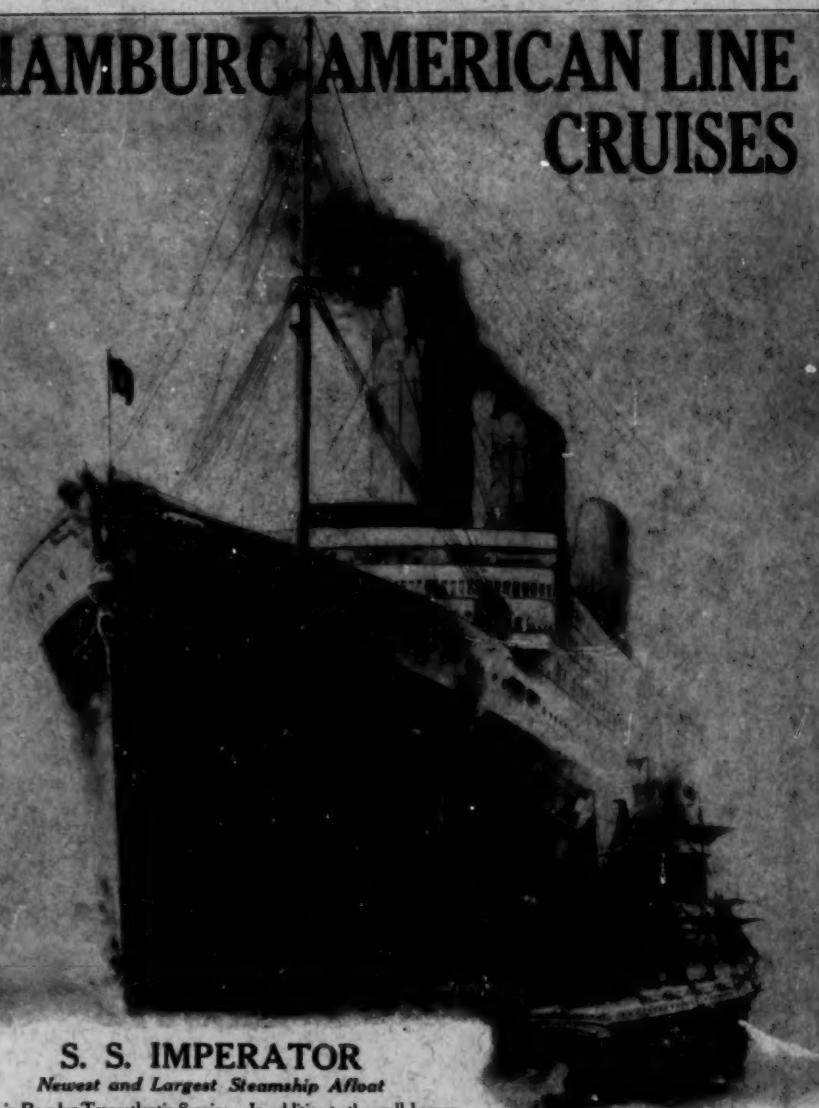
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